

# STRANGE CASE OF HENRY TOPLASS



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*THE STRANGE CASE*  
*OF*  
*HENRY TOPLASS*  
*AND CAPT. SHIERS*

*BY*  
*JOHN W. POSTGATE*

*CHICAGO*  
*W. B. CONKEY COMPANY*



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## CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I      The Reporter's Assignment.      -      -	7
II     The Reporter at Work.      -      -	15
III    A Salvation Sister.      -      -	27
IV    The Captain of the Army.      -      -	35
V     A Dreadful Shipwreck.      -      -	42
VI    The Curse of Rum.      -      -	55
VII   Captain Shiers Goes Mad.      -      -	65
VIII   Life in Lancashire.      -      -	71
IX    The Reporter Writes an Article.      -      -	77
X     News of a Long Lost Uncle.      -      -	83
XI    The Scar on His Forehead.      -      -	92
XII   Forebodings of Trouble.      -      -	100
XIII   The Doctor's Strange Discovery.      -      -	113
XIV   At the Salvation Barracks.      -      -	121
XV    Little Bob's Account of His Father.      -	128
XVI   Barton Tells His Story.      -      -	137
XVII   Jealousy at Work.      -      -	148
XVIII   Another Curious Complication.      -	155
XIX   Captain Shiers Slips the Traces.      -      -	168
XX    Ned Barton Murdered.      -      -	177
XXI   Breaking the News to Mrs. Shiers.      -	184
XXII   The Salvation Captain Dead.      -      -	192
XXIII   By the Grave at Woodlawn.      -      -	201





## CHAPTER I.

### THE REPORTER'S ASSIGNMENT.

"See what you can make of this," said the City Editor one afternoon in June 188—, when I reported for duty as a member of the local staff of a Chicago newspaper. He handed me the following clipping from a rival journal:

There was an exciting scene at the meeting of the Salvation Army last night. During their wild and curious service, Captain Shiers placed his cornet to his lips and played a few bars of "Nearer, my God, to Thee." A well-dressed lady in the audience sprang to her feet and cried: "It is he! my husband, oh! my husband!" and then fell fainting to the floor. The meeting was at once thrown into a fever of excitement. It was evident that the lady's exclamation had reference to the musical salvationist, who is a married man, and one of the most active members of the noisy army. Captain Shiers was among the first to rush to the assistance of the lady, who quickly recovered from her fainting fit and threw her arms around his neck, crying. "Oh! Henry, I

have found you at last! Take me home! Take me home! Captain Shiers seemed bewildered by the lady's conduct, and to increase the confusion into which the meeting was thrown, his wife, who plays the tambourine in the street parades, rushed forward shouting, "The woman must be out of her mind; this is my husband!" The two women stared strangely at each other, while Captain Shiers, who had recovered his self-possession, said calmly, "I'm afraid you're laboring under some delusion, ma'am; I've nivver seen you before; this is my waife." The tambourinist turned and glanced proudly into the captain's face, and then kissed him as though she wished to give instant emphasis to the fact that he was truly her liege lord. For a moment or two the lady who had caused the scene looked at them in a dazed fashion, and then murmuring, "Oh! I'm sorry; excuse me," moved quickly out of the hall, and was soon lost to view in the crowded street. The service proceeded as usual after this strange interruption, Captain Shiers prayed for the poor afflicted creature, as he termed the lady who had claimed him as her husband, but his manner betrayed no unusual emotion. After the meeting he said to the reporter, "It's something beyond my ken. I nivver

saw the woman before. Mebbe she wor carried wi' excitement—a kind of hysterical like—and she'll forgit all aboot it by th' morning. This is my waife; we've been married sixteen years or mair." He looked lovingly at the tambourinist, who took his arm proudly and confidingly as they left the meeting place. No one knew the lady whose sensational declaration and fainting fit added another to the many queer scenes which this band of noisy fanatics have caused in Chicago.

"I think there is a story behind this," continued the City Editor, after I had read the article. "This Captain Shiers, I am told, bears a close facial and physical resemblance to Henry Toplass, the South Water Street commission merchant who, you will remember, disappeared very mysteriously five or six years ago. Toplass was an Englishman by birth and a man of fair education. This Shiers has a strong Yorkshire accent, and he speaks so naturally that one can hardly believe it assumed. But for that fact I could almost swear that he is the missing Toplass. You notice that the lady called him Henry. I have no doubt she is Mrs. Toplass, and that she was attracted to the meeting by rumors of the remarkable resemblance of the salvationist to her



missing husband. Look into the matter carefully. Call on Mrs. Toplass, and have a talk with Shiers and his wife. If you find anything in the case write it up for all it is worth. You may get a good "scoop." We can stand something lively about those salvation cranks, who have been irritating the public with their peculiar antics."

I remembered the Toplass disappearance case, which caused a profound sensation at the time. The man was in a prosperous way of business and lived in a handsome house on Prairie avenue. His wife was one of the leading members of a South Side Episcopal church. They had two pretty children, and their domestic life was spoken of as calm and happy. Toplass owned considerable real estate and had a large sum invested in railroad securities. Most of his property was transferred to his wife a year before he disappeared. His habits were reported correct in every respect. There was apparently no blemish on his character. He seemed devoted to his wife and children. To his clerks he was kind and considerate, and he was always ready with a substantial response to the calls of charity. In short, he had all the traits of an open-handed

merchant, whose life was running in smooth and congenial channels.

One Saturday morning in September, 187-, Mr. Toplass kissed his wife and children good-by as usual, promising to return early in the afternoon and take them for a drive to South Park. He was at the warehouse attending to business with his accustomed energy until lunch time, when he left matters in charge of his chief clerk, William Trowbridge, remarking that he would be down early on Monday morning to superintend some large shipments of produce. After he turned south on Clark street, Mr. Toplass was never seen again by any one who knew him.

Mrs. Toplass and the little ones waited in vain for the promised carriage ride. She thought business detained her husband, and, while sorry for the disappointment of the children who dearly loved an outing with papa, gave herself no uneasiness until after dinner, when the absence of Mr. Toplass began to alarm her. He rarely stayed away from the evening meal without sending word. Something had gone wrong, she was convinced, and when 11 o'clock struck and there was still no sign of her husband, the suspense became unbearable, and she



rushed to the Cottage Grove avenue police station and startled the desk sergeant by a frantic declaration that Mr. Toplass was robbed and probably murdered.

The officer smiled when he ascertained that this awful crime existed only in the imagination of his excited visitor, and he said quietly:

"Do not be uneasy, madam; urgent business has undoubtedly kept Mr. Toplass from home. He will be with you safe and sound before long."

The sergeant's confident manner soothed Mrs. Toplass, who was escorted home by a night patrolman. But she watched by the parlor window all that night. Every footstep on the avenue caused her to start with nervous fear; the tick of the clock on the mantelpiece filled her with unutterable dread. An awful foreboding of evil came upon the anxious woman, and when the morning dawned and the sun shot furtive rays through the curtains, her drawn and haggard face told the story of that wretched vigil. She looked ten years older than she did when her husband kissed her good-by on Saturday morning.

Unable to contain herself longer, by six o'clock Mrs. Toplass was at the boarding house of Mr.



Trowbridge on Wabash avenue asking tidings of her missing husband. The clerk was visibly alarmed by her inquiries.

"Not home yet!" he exclaimed; "I cannot understand it. Mr. Toplass left the warehouse at one o'clock yesterday afternoon stating that he was going home."

Mrs. Toplass fell to the floor in a swoon. Consigning her to the care of his landlady, the clerk posted off to police headquarters to set inquiries afoot concerning his missing employer. Several officers of the central detail were put to work on the case, but no trace of Mr. Toplass could be found. Days, weeks, and months passed, but despite the most vigorous search and earnest inquiries through the columns of the press, the movements of the merchant from the time he turned homeward on Clark street remained enveloped in mystery.

Suggestions of foul play led to no clue. There was no apparent ground for Mr. Toplass deserting his wife and family. His affairs were in excellent shape; his business was prosperous; not the slightest of unfortunate entanglements was given by his friends and associates. Blessed with a tranquil happy home, himself of a sunny, sanguine temperament,

none suggested suicide as a solution of the mystery.

The detectives, with their customary perspicuity decided that it was a case of robbery and murder, but they did not produce a particle of evidence to substantiate this theory. Up to this day the fate of Mr. Toplass was surrounded by dense and impenetrable obscurity.

Such, in brief, was the history of this mysterious disappearance. This incident at the Salvation army meeting recalled the circumstances vividly to my mind. The simple intimation that Captain Shiers was wonderfully like Henry Toplass was sufficient in itself to arouse the professional ardor of a reporter. With curious thoughts flashing through my mind I put my wad of copy paper in my pocket and started on the assignment.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE REPORTER AT WORK.

Like the City Editor, I had jumped to the conclusion that Mrs. Toplass was the woman who interrupted the meeting of the salvationists, and, also like him, I had an earnest hope that Captain Shiers would prove to be Henry Toplass, and thus settle a case which had given an army of astute detectives no end of trouble and solicitude. This hope, I may add by way of explanation, sprang directly from the news instinct which governs the work of most reporters, and not from a desire, as some readers may imagine, to revel in the salacious particulars such a discovery might bring to light.

Nothing gives a newspaper man more satisfaction than the solution of mysteries which have interested the public and baffled the investigating skill of self-styled experts. If Captain Shiersturned out to be the missing merchant, the public would not rest content until all the details of his strange disappearance, his curious masquerading and peculiar relations with the sister who proudly called him



husband, were spread out in the columns of the press. A metamorphosis of this kind is uncommon even in these days of startling sensations, and the wildest interest would be aroused by its exposure. Besides, such is the unconquerable bias of society when its prejudices are touched, it would intensify the dislike of this strange band of religionists, who think bass drums and trumpets, tambourines and castanets, weird groans and wild articulations augment the saving power of the Gentle Master's name.

It was with some misgivings that I set out for the Toplass residence. The task allotted me was a delicate one. Few persons like to talk of their private sorrows for publication, and every reporter has a profound respect for the sanctity of grief and domestic tribulation. It is true that the contrary opinion prevails in non-professional circles; but if those who rail about the alleged prying proclivities and heartlessness of news-gatherers had an inkling of the many scandals mercifully suppressed in the local room of a daily newspaper, they would stand aghast at the unrevealed wickedness of the world, and ask pardon of the reporters for their ignorant and ill-natured censure.

Now, although the disappearance of Henry Toplass was common property in a news sense, and the publicity at the time of its occurrence one of the best means for determining his fate, yet it was improbable that his wife would willingly divulge the circumstances which led her to attend the salvation meeting and impelled the hysterical declaration that Captain Shiers was her long-lost spouse. A knowledge of these circumstances was necessary for the investigation; how to obtain that knowledge, should Mrs. Toplass shrink from disclosing the facts, was the problem which confronted me when I presented my card at No. — Prairie Avenue and requested an audience.

I was shown into the parlor, and the neat housemaid returned with the message that Mrs. Toplass would join me in a few moments. Over the mantel was the full-length portrait of a good-looking portly man; it bore the signature of Ivan Peronet, and was a strong and artistic piece of work. I surmised at once that it was a counterfeit presentment of Henry Toplass, and I made a close study of the face and figure for professional purposes.

The face was a striking one. The forehead broad, white and unwrinkled; the eyes a deep hazel,



and with a steady, frank expression; the nose rather short, fleshy and wide at the nostrils; the lips full and sensual, with an incurve at the corners which physiognomists say is a sure sign of weakness or irresolution. A brown mustache partly concealed this defect. Otherwise the face was pleasing. It was open and honest and suggestive of kindness and good temper. The poise of the head denoted self-possession and intelligence, and I found it difficult to conceive that such a man could be the leader of a straggling band of religious enthusiasts whose grotesque attire and curious customs laid them open to the abuse and scorn of ribald mobs.

While I was thus dissecting the character of Henry Toplass as disclosed by the portrait, Mrs. Toplass entered the parlor and with a timid, nervous air asked the object of my visit. She was a slender, delicate woman, with large mournful gray eyes and deep lines over her upper lip that told plainly of sorrow and suffering. Her face had been beautiful; it was still refined and interesting; but the cheeks were thin and sallow, and her brow, high and finely curved at the temples, was creased by the busy hand of carking care. Her manner was gentle and womanly; her voice low and softly toned, albeit



there was a timorous quiver in it suggestive of grief and anxiety.

"Pardon me, Madam," I said, deeming it best to plunge at once into the subject, "owing to an incident that occurred at the salvation army meeting last night—"

"For pity's sake," interrupted Mrs. Toplass, wringing her hands nervously, "let that matter drop. I was mistaken, sadly mistaken. That man cannot be my husband. No! Henry would never turn a deaf ear to the yearning cry of his wife's heart."

I did not expect so sudden a verification of the surmise that Mrs. Toplass was the lady who caused the scene at the Salvation Army meeting. Her acknowledgment promised well for the groundwork of a sensational story. The plaintiveness of her last words indicated a lingering doubt as to the identity of Captain Shiers.

"Then you really believed your husband was conducting the meeting?" I asked.

"Oh, yes!" she replied, tears springing into her eyes, "I seemed to hear Henry's own voice; the form and face were the same; the expression of the eyes and little tricks of action—all brought up the picture of my husband, whose absence I have mourned

night and day for five weary years, and I cried out in supreme desolation of spirit. But, Ah ! sir, I was deceived. I suppose the strange likeness and the familiar tones of voice wrought upon my anxious heart until I scarce knew what I was doing. It was a trying moment, sir, and my feelings overcame me."

Mrs. Toplass covered her face with her hands and sobbed bitterly. Before I could frame any words of sympathy she mastered the tears and begged of me to keep further mention of the affair out of the newspapers.

"It can do no good," she said mournfully, "to revive the story of my husband's disappearance or to dwell upon the grievous mistake I made last night. Think of my suffering, sir; do not, for Heaven's sake, probe again the wound of a sacred sorrow. You may do harm to my—to this Captain Shiers, who is evidently a devout and earnest man."

Mrs. Toplass gave a sigh of relief when I told her that nothing had yet been published that connected either herself or missing husband with the incident of the previous night.

"Oh ! I am so thankful," she cried. "It would be such an awful thing if—"

She stopped abruptly and looked into my face with some confusion. Could it be that, despite the man's emphatic denial, she still believed him to be her husband? Trusting to woman's impulsiveness to settle this suspicion, I put the question bluntly.

"Tell me plainly, madam; do you still think Captain Shiers is your missing husband?"

A look of anxiety overspread her face as she replied:

"Oh! I do not know; I do not know what to think. He is so much like Mr. Toplass in face and manner, and, then, the way he played that hymn—it was so like Henry!"

The newspaper paragraph stated that the hysterical cry of the unknown lady quickly followed the captain's cornet solo. I thought of this as I inquired:

"Did Mr. Toplass play the cornet?"

"No, sir; but at times he used to amuse the children by imitating musical instruments, and one of his favorite tunes was "Nearer, my God, to Thee." When I heard that played last night a peculiar turn of the player recalled those happy days to my mind. It seemed as if we were all around the fireside again. I seemed to see Henry romping with the



little ones; I seemed to hear the notes of the hymn dropping from his lips. It was so real, so cruelly vivid. I cried out to Henry, and the picture vanished. It was a bitter, bitter trial."

The woman bent her head again and wept. I was disappointed by her explanation. The task of unmasking Captain Shiers would have been easier had Mr. Toplass been a cornet player, as there is a distinctiveness of style in the manipulation of that instrument almost as valuable for detective purposes as peculiarities in handwriting. But this imitative faculty of the missing merchant was worth remembering, and I made a mental note of it for use during the inquiry.

As soon as Mrs. Toplass became composed, I asked:

"How did you learn of the resemblance of Captain Shiers to your husband?"

"Through one of the servants," she answered. "The girl, who was with us in the happy days, attended a meeting of the Salvation army and was startled by the surprising likeness. The man doesn't talk like Mr. Toplass," she told me, "but he has the same heavy voice, the same shrug of the shoulders, and were it not that his hair is grayer

and thinner about the temples, I could almost swear to him." This information perplexed me. I could not believe that Henry would play a double part. I could not imagine him in any such role. I had almost given him up as dead. More out of curiosity than any belief that I should find Henry, I went to the meeting last night, and you know the sad result."

Mrs. Toplass was very much agitated during this recital. It was plain that her experience of the previous night would harass her for many days to come. A certain hesitancy in her utterance at times convinced me also that she was not fully satisfied at heart that Captain Shiers was the man he pretended to be. But I thought it impolitic to pursue that point at present; I wanted to see the salvationist and gauge his character before venturing further on so delicate a topic.

After a pause Mrs. Toplass timidly asked how her identity had been discovered.

"The city editor was struck by the resemblance between Captain Shiers and Mr. Toplass," I replied.

"Did he express any decided view about it?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes. He said were it not for the Yorkshire accent of the man he could almost swear that Captain Shiers and Mr. Toplass were one and the same person."

"Yes, the accent is strange and bewildering," she said musingly; "it is hardly possible that it could be assumed for the purpose of deception. Henry's voice was pleasant and refined, while this man is coarse and rather vulgar. But (recovering herself with a start) what am I thinking about? It is only a remarkable facial resemblance—that is all."

Something in her manner prompted me to ask whether any domestic difficulty preceded the disappearance of Mr. Toplass.

"No, sir," was the somewhat sharp response, as a slight flush rose in her cheeks; "our domestic life was calm and serene. Mr. Toplass was all any woman could wish as a husband and father; he loved his home and his children, and his sole thoughts were for our happiness. Ah! me! But why prolong this inquiry, sir; it is very painful to me. I am very sorry I went to that meeting, since it has reopened the wound of my great sorrow, and may cause annoyance to a worthy man."



As I rose to take my leave, Mrs. Toplass again entreated me, with tears in her eyes, to let the matter drop.

"You are the only reporter I have talked with on this subject for several years," she said, "you are the only person who has identified me as the woman who caused the scene. Pray be merciful and do not use this advantage. Promise me not to print anything else about it."

"I must report to the office," I replied, "Whether anything else is published or not will depend very much on what Captain Shiers has to say."

"Then you are going to see him," she cried in a tone of alarm.

"Yes, my instructions are to interview him."

"Dear, dear, this is dreadful."

Mrs. Toplass wrung her hands so pitifully and looked so woe-begone that I assured her nothing should be published that would give her pain.

"Captain Shiers will doubtless regard the matter as an odd case of mistaken identity," I said, "and repeat that he knows nothing of the lady who caused the excitement. Then, if you will promise me one thing, in giving his explanation I will take

care that neither your name nor that of your husband is mentioned in the report."

"What must I promise?" she eagerly asked.

"To see no other reporter until you hear from me."

"I will gladly pledge myself to that," she responded with a faint smile. "To avoid other interviewers I will visit relatives on the west side for a few days."

"A very good plan. Perhaps you will not have any other callers, but to avoid accidents I would advise you to instruct your servants to tell all inquirers that you have gone out of town."

Mrs. Toplass agreed to this, and gave me the address of her relatives so that I might inform her personally of the result of my interview with the salvation captain.

## CHAPTER III.

### A SALVATION SISTER.

In making this arrangement with Mrs. Toplass I had two objects in view. I wanted, first, to get her beyond the reach of other newspaper men who might scent a sensation in the occurrence of the previous night, and second, I wished to establish friendly relations with the unfortunate lady whose distress not only aroused my sympathy, but strengthened the impression that in Captain Shiers, the enthusiastic salvationist, she had really recognized her missing husband.. Everything seemed to be working in the direction of a first class "scoop," and, while I was naturally elated over the outlook, I wished to guard myself from being surprised or forestalled by a professional rival. All reporters will appreciate my position. A "scoop" of this importance would be a big-feather in my cap, even if it did not lead to a pleasant interview with the cashier.

I had no difficulty in finding Captain Shiers' quarters. He and his wife "kept house" in three



rooms over a grocery store on South Halsted street. The rooms were scantily furnished, but there was an air of cleanliness about them which was refreshingly wholesome in that neighborhood. It was Mrs. Shiers who answered my knock and invited me into the small sitting-room. Woman-like she apologized for the meagreness of the apartment, but, as she dusted a creaking chair for my accommodation, she added with cheerful resignation:

"If we are not rich in this world's goods, sir, yet we find the Lord's work is pleasant and profitable under all conditions and circumstances. - One can be happy in a garret if His divine love sustains us."

Mrs. Shiers was a pleasant-featured little woman, with rich auburn hair, and large hopeful blue eyes. In repose her face showed some traces of care, but when she spoke it was radiant with peace and content. Her words were well chosen and the sentences clear-cut and refined. There was no suggestion of cant in her conversation; an earnest, soulful piety seemed to pervade her, and one forgot as he looked in her bright peaceful face and listened to her soft cheerful voice, that she played the tambourine in street parades, and sometimes

shrieked wildly in exhortation during the excitement of a semi-barbaric service.

Mrs. Shiers divined my mission when I told her I was a reporter and wished an interview with her husband.

"Yes, I understand," she remarked quietly, "you want to see him about the affair of last night. John and I talked the matter over; we are very sorry for the poor lady, who seemed so grieved and distressed. Do you know who she is?"

"Yes," I answered, looking steadily in her face, "she is a wealthy lady whose husband disappeared in a strange manner about five years ago. She was told of the remarkable resemblance Captain Shiers bore to him, and went to the meeting last night out of curiosity and was carried away by her feelings."

"How sad," exclaimed the little woman in a tone of deep sympathy, "and she really thought Captain Shiers was the missing one. Ah! I can enter into her feelings; there is no desolation like unto that of a deserted wife, no misery so acute as that of a sorrowing woman listening for a familiar footstep, longing for the 'touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still.' Poor, stricken thing. I do hope she has found comfort in the Savior, that

she has thrown the burden of her grief at His feet and secured that peace and consolation which the world cannot give, but which is the sweet portion of those who trust in the Lord during sunshine and storm."

A rapt, reverential look came over Mrs. Shiers' face; she lifted her eyes heavenward as she spoke, and the tender tones of her voice came straight from the well-spring of a devout and loving heart. All thoughts of interrogating this woman, who was evidently well and deeply learned in the mysteries of human sorrow, left my mind. She said her husband would be home presently, and while waiting for him, as I refrained from further mention of my business, we drifted into a conversation on the aims and methods of the Salvation Army.

As might be expected, Mrs. Shiers was an enthusiast on this subject. "The army," she said, "was not organized to supplant existing forms of devotion: it was not expected that its barracks would take the place of the churches of any denomination, but it was intended to reach a class of people whom the churches, with their formal ritual, prosperous ministers and well-dressed pewholders, did not attract. The blare of trumpets, the thunder of



drums, and the jingle and rattle of tambourines were necessary to awaken the dull sensibility of the lower strata of society; the red-striped uniform, the military caps, the martial air of the commanders, and disciplined obedience of the rank and file, filled the common ideal of the army of the Lord and largely aided the assaults on the strongholds of sin. In crowded quarters where the conditions of life are severe and the temptations to carnal indulgence strong, the beat of the Salvation drum warned sinners of their mortal peril and rallied them to the Cross. The work of the army was largely missionary in its nature; it carried news of the gospel to places where ministers seldom penetrated, and counteracted the vice and misery which seem inseparable from foul air, vile surroundings and squalid poverty."

"There are such districts in every large city," said Mrs. Shiers, "and from them we obtain our most valuable recruits, for no man can touch the heart of the weary, oppressed, struggling poor like one who has experienced the hardships of their lot and knows the full measure of their trials and misfortunes. Ah! sir, many a noble soul is groveling in the by-lanes and alleys of this great city whom

the sound of the drum will yet awaken to a burning consciousness of guilt, and, who, saved by the glorious grace of salvation, will in turn rescue hundreds of his fellows from the grinding bondage of sin. It is a great work, sir, the saving of souls."

The woman grew eloquent as she dilated on this work. There was no mistaking her earnestness or her simple, trustful piety; she had the elements of a saint in her composition, and undoubtedly found the mild species of persecution to which many of the Salvation sisters have been subjected act like balm on her martyr-like spirit. I hinted that it must be unpleasant to parade the streets and hearken to the scoffs and jeers of the mob.

"Unpleasant!" she exclaimed reprovably; "no, sir; it is one of the greatest joys of my heart to know that I am doing the Master's work. What is the laugh or scorn of the world to me? I have known what it is to sit with the scornful, and I thank God sincerely for showing me the sinfulness of my heart and washing me clean in the blood of the Lamb. The jeers and ribalry of the crowd only make me more determined to do all in my power to defeat the machinations of the devil and liberate souls from the thralldom of sin."

"How long have you been an active member of the army?" I asked.

"Only four years," she responded with a sigh. "I count every day prior to my conversion as mis-spent and lost. It was a glad day when John came home from his pilgrimage a changed man. We had been separated a long time, sir. He was a head-strong, sinful man for years after our marriage, but his heart was all right; he was only blinded and maddened by the snares and pitfalls of the evil one. The Salvation Army saved his soul, sir. It kept him from drink, it softened his spirit, it moulded his passionate nature into tenderness and fired his heart to work for Christ. The holy peace of the last few years has repaid me a hundredfold for the miseries and wretchedness of the past. I praise God every hour for his great mercy to John and myself; had I a thousand lives I would gladly consecrate them to the cause which has wrought such a wonderful, glorious change in our hearts."

It did one good to listen to this enthusiastic advocate of a band of workers whose sole worldly portion, according to my restricted vision, consisted in jibes and jeers and vulgar abuse. The past to which Mrs. Shiers so pathetically referred to must



have been a dismal one, since it was hard to conceive that this refined and sensitive woman could ally herself to the Salvationists unless the conditions of her life had been uncommonly dreary and severe. I was on the point of asking about the separation of herself and husband when a heavy step was heard on the creaking stairs.

"Here comes John," she cried, her face illuminated with smiles; "he will be very glad to see you and give you his version of that unfortunate occurrence at the meeting last night."

The door opened and a splendid specimen of physical manhood stepped into the room, saying, in a strong, cheery voice:

"Iw've browt steak for supper, lass. Gie us a kiss an' git it riddy. Iw'm welly clemmed, and we maun be stirrin' early to-neet."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CAPTAIN OF THE ARMY.

Captain Shiers was a living counterpart of the portrait in Mrs. Toplass' parlor. He had the same well-knit form, the same broad intellectual forehead, the same kindly, steadfast eyes, the same expression of geniality and good humor. True, as the servant described, the hair was mixed with gray and thinning around the temples, and there were slight wrinkles on the brow which were not in the painting, but those finger marks of time did not affect the striking likeness, and I was not surprised that Mrs. Toplass had been moved into greeting him as her husband.

He came into the little sitting-room with a light, elastic tread; his frank face was wreathed with pleasant smiles, and the blithe and cheery tone of his deep chest voice seemed to derive additional charm from the strong Yorkshire dialect. He caught sight of me as he advanced towards his wife with the beefsteak wrapped in brown paper.

"Excuse me, sir," he said with homely courtesy, "I thowt Lizzie wor aloan. We family folk hev got

to luke efter th' inner mon and thou munnat maind th' saight of a bit of provender."

Mrs. Shiers took the parcel from his hand and said, smilingly:

"This gentleman is from one of the newspapers, John; he wants to hear what you have to say about what happened at the meeting last night."

"Ah! that's arll reet," he responded in the same hearty manner, as he drew up a chair near where I sat; "I cannot tell him mair than what wor printed; but go ahead wi' thy questions, lad."

"The lady who interrupted you," I said, "has had a very sad experience, Captain. When she cried out in the meeting she was firmly convinced you were her husband, who disappeared several years ago and concerning whom nothing has since been learned."

"Poor creetur!" said the man with true sympathy in his voice, "and she thowt I wor her mon. Mebbe her head wor a little turned."

"She certainly is distracted with grief, but otherwise she is perfectly responsible."

"What does thou meen?" he asked quickly, with a puzzled expression on his face, "thou certainly doesn't think I've got two wives, eh?"



"No, certainly not, sir," I hastened to respond, as I noticed a shadow flash across Mrs. Shiers' brow; "certainly not, but you bear such a striking resemblance to the missing man that I thought you might probably be a relative."

"What wor his naame?"

"Henry Toplass; he was a commission merchant of Chicago."

"Toplass!" he exclaimed, in amazement. "Why, that wor my mother's maiden naame, but we've no relations in America, and I doan't know of ony in oor family who lukes laike me. It bean't a common naame, neither; there's nobbut a few Toplasses in Yorkshire, and we can traace them for welly a hundred years back."

"Would you mind giving me a little of your family history, sir?" I asked.

"Why, no, I've no objections to that, lad," was the ready response, "but I cannot see what good it'll do. My naame's not Toplass, and I nivver set foot in Chickargo until three months back, when I came to work i' th' Lord's vineyard."

"But the name, you say, belongs to your mother's family, and, then, this strong resemblance which misleads ev - -

"Coom, coom," said the Salvationist, with a slight chuckle and a humorous twinkle in his eyes! "doan't beat abawt th' bush, my lad. Oot wi' it, Thou cam' here thinkin' thou'd faind this wooman's husband; noo didn't thou? Speek oot laike a mon!"

"Well, as you put it that way," I stammered, being a little surprised by the Captain's good humored bluntness, "I must confess the situation was a strange one, but—"

"But," he interrupted in the same bluff fashion, "but efter seein' and talkin' wi' my lass, thou didn't think I could be so treacherously bad as to deceive this little wooman, cruelly leave th' other yane to pine her life awaay, and act th' pairt of a lyin' hypocrite in th' saight of my Maaker. Bean't that it?"

"John," said his wife, before I could frame a reply, "the gentleman has said nothing of the kind. Don't be foolish, dear."

She stepped to his chair and stroked the man's forehead gently. He caught her hand and kissed it, and from the look they exchanged—a soft, warning expression on her part and a responsive, assuring glance on his—I imagined the Captain was not always sure of his temper.

“Don’t be afeered, lass,” he said with a pleasant smile; “th’ owd Adam is deed enuff noo. Thank God! th’ daay when unjust suspicion and fause accusation could roose me is lang past. I nobbut wanted this lad to be oot-spoken—to show me reet awaay what wor th’ wurst he thowt, so that I mowt meet it manful laiike and crush ony divil’s invention at burth. Noo, lad, oot wi’ it.”

Thus appealed to, I told the man frankly that I did entertain the suspicion before meeting him that he might be the missing merchant, but that his honest, manly way in meeting me more than half-way convinced me that I was mistaken.

“That’s spokken laiike a mon,” he cried, with bluff heartiness; “it’s allers best to be honest and abuve boord. Noo, I doan’t maind tellin’ thee that I’m sorely tempted at taimes to resent th’ treatment we get i’ this coountry. Folk seeam to think, becos our waays bean’t loike theirs, that we’re actin’ a pairt—that when we maerch through th’ streets wi’ oor drums and trumpets, playing and singin’ God’s music and praaisin’ Him in th’ manner we think pleasin’ to Him and helpful to His holy cause, we do it for a low kaind o’ self-glorification. But I want to tell thee, lad, that ivvery thing we do—oor



drum beetin' and cries of 'Hallelujah,' oor streat prayers and calls to th' wicked—coom fram hairts swellin, wi' luv for oor fellow-bein's and burstin' wi' a desire to bring them arll under th' saavin' graace of Jesus. Mobs may hoot and jeer; they may drive us aboot laike felons; they may pelt us wi' mud and jostle us inti th' gooters; but we can stand arll this and mair; we can endure arll manner o' scorn and abuse and persecution wi' th' prood consciousness that arll we do, and arll we suffer is for the saake of lost humanity, for whom Christ suffered and died on th' Cross."

There was something grand and noble in the man's face as he defended the conduct of his peculiar sect. The rough eloquence of his language had a pleasing cadence. I could readily imagine, from his homely outburst, how powerfully Captain Shiers might sway his fellows. There was an emotional quality in his voice, a quaint pathos in his dialect, which could not fail to stir the heart of sympathetic auditors.

"Noo," he continued, "hevin' set oursels reet to start wi', if thou'rt still of a maind to hear summat o' my laife Iw'll accommodate thee wi' pleasure. And I may as well tell thee at yance it winnat help

thee i' th' waik of faindin' th' hoosband o' that poor wooman. It's a groosoom story—fooll of hairt-burnin's and sinfulness, runnin' ower wi' blunders and wickedness, but, thank th' Lord, roounded at last wi' graace fram heaven and smoothed wi' th' gentle hand of a forgivin' Savior."

"I will esteem it a great favor, indeed, Captain Shiers," I said, "to listen to your history."

"Arll reet, lad; thou shall hev it," said the Captain, "Lizzie, my lass, thou'd better go and get sooper riddy, an' keep Bob awaay for th' present."

This suggestion was accompanied by a significant glance at his wife, who at once arose and left the room. I inferred that there was something in the coming recital which he did not want Mrs. Shiers to hear. The Captain's next remark verified my suspicion, for as soon as the door closed he said:

"She's a good lass, sir—ower good for me—and there's soom things I doan't laiike to speek abawt afore her. I'll just hev a bit o' 'bacca, and then I'll make my confession, which'll be an honest and oppen yañe, and, I trust, will be good for my soul."

## CHAPTER V.

### A DREADFUL SHIPWRECK.

Filling and lighting a briar root pipe, Captain Shiers puffed at it composedly a few seconds, a quiet, thoughtful look overspreading his face as he felt the soothing influence of the weed.

"There's nowt laiike a bit o' 'bacca for reflective purposes," he began; "soom folks saay it beant Christian laiike to smoak, but I doan't agree wi' 'em. 'Bacca mayn't be good for soom chaps wi' poor stomachs and weak yeds, but it's a raar solace for those wi' active mainds and broad showlders—men who hev to bustle through laife and hev few comforts to console them efter a haard day's wark. There's nowt said i' th' Baible abawt smoakin', and when the Holy Writ is silent on a subject so closely concerning mankind I'm content to follow coostum and enjoy my paibe. 'Bacca doan't craaze a man loike drink; it don't mak' him starve his wife and beat his childer; it doan't fill prisons and pest houses; it doan't mak' froot for the gailows tree.

' mental disinfectant and a good kaind frind to



tired folk; and I'm goin' to stick to my paibe so lang as it doan't interfere wi' my duty while yeildin' me bodily coomfort. Besides, Lizzie laikes to see me smoak; its so home-laike, she says. I tell thee this, lad, so thou may know hoo I stand on th' 'bacca question."

"We're in accord on that subject," I remarked, taking a cigar from my vest pocket, "and if you have no objections I'll take a few whiffs myself."

"That's reet, lad," was his hearty response; "mak' thysen at whoam."

He puffed away in silence a while, as though meditating how to begin his story. Then, slowly emitting an unusually large cloud of blue, curling smoke, he said:

"Noo, my lad, in what I've got to say thou'll faind soom strange and sad things which'll go to show that I've bin a bad mon, unworthy of th' graate blessin' which has fallen on me since I wor saaved. Soom folks doan't loike to speak abawt their sins, but it's allers best to mak' a clean brist of ivverything, especially when yan is in a religious callin'; for its woonderful hoo gratified men are to faind that other folk hev bin warse than themsens and still hev bin purified by Divine graace. I'm

not much of a philosopher, but I think I'm reet in saying that ivvery mon has his oan roole of conduct and conscience by which he not oanly maps oot his oan laife but measures that of others. Finnicky people doan't laiike to listen to th' rough tales o' reformed men, becos they cannot enter into their trials and feelin's; but sprid afoar men hoo've bin on th' grindstane of bitter experience, thoase tales hev a woonderful evangelizing result; they speak straight whoam to th' hairt and bring scores under the peaceful infloence of th' Gospel of Trooth.

"Noo, my roole of laife wor selfishness. I thowt of neebody's coomfort but my oan. If I thowt a glass o' yale wud gie me pleasure, I tuk it, and didn't maind hoose hairt wor wrung when I got th' drunken staggers and cussed and swear till I wor black i' th' face. I wor yedstrong when I wor a babby, and I got warse and warse as I grew owder and owt to hev known better. It's such a poower of satisfaction to hev yan's oan waay, and I wad hev maine in spite of ivverything and ivverybody; and I got it, and sairly I soofered fram it when I grew to manhood and tuk upon masen th' graave responsibilities of wedded laife.

"But I'm gettin' a-yed o' my story. I wor born near Whitby in Yorkshire, just forty-two years sin. You mebbe hev' heard o' Whitby. It's a taidy sea-port on th' coast, wi' a comical-lookin' quay, narrow, cobble-stane streats, and fishy-smellin' hooses, th' moss-covered ruins of a faamous owd abbey, a puffy owd bellman hoo cries doon scowldin' wives, advertises auction saales, and lots of other curus things in brick and mortar and human flesh. It's there where they get jet for brooches and other fal-lals, and where they find those petrified fossils and shell-fish which tell th' wiseacres hoo owd th' world is, and what a poor insignificant creetur mon is efter arll's said and dune.

"My folks wor farmers twelve miles oot of Whitby. They wor honest, God-fearin' people, and as I wor th' oonly son, th' owd mon wanted to mak' me useful wi' th' plow and harrow and dibble, so that in good taime I maight tak chaarge o' th' plaace, and become a yeoman o' th' soil. But I nivver tuk kaindly to th' idee; easterly winds used to blaw sea scud ower oor fields, and we cud hear th' dull roar o' th' waaves dashin agin th' high cliffs o' Whitby, and soomhoo or other I got th' sea faiver, and nowt would content me but a birth in a Baltic



trader. Faather tried horsewhippin', layin' on heavily wi' th' feear o' th' Lord in his hairt; muther tried prayin' and greetin'; but it wor all to no purpose, for I ran awaay to Hartpond in Doorham when I wor a shaaver of fowerteen, and shipped as cabin boy in th' Rising Sun, a fine clipper-built brig, saaled by Skipper Johnson, as braight and cheery a mariner as iver trod th' deck of a North Country collier.

"I'll never forget my fust and last voyage; it knocked arll th' romance of capstan sangs and fo' castle yarns oot o' my hairt and cured me forivver of sea-farin' desires. Lang afore we reached Dantzic on th' outward trip I wor sick of a sailor's laife, and if we'd been in an English port when we cast anchor there, I should hev thrown overboord what little pluck I'd left, slipped my moorin's, and hoisted saal for whoam wi'oot askin' or waitin' for clearance paapers. But I had to grin and bear th' haardships of a cabin boy's lot in a forrin' port, and faace th' unknown miseries o' th' passage back wi' as stoot a hairt as I could muster.

"We maad faine weather for three days efter leaving Dantzic and arll hands wor gay wi' th' thowts of a quick run. Th' skipper wor in raar good

spirits, and he kept jokin' th' mate abawt his sweet-hairt, for he'd buxom Nancy Meredith's picture hung up near his berth in th' cabin.

"Thou woan't need to be smirkin' at her picture much langer'. Captain Johnson would say with a hairy laugh. 'We'll be in Hartpond Bay in fower daays mair, and Nancy'll be around thy neck afoar we're moored to th' quay.'

"And Jack Nelson, th' maate, would purse oop his lips to stop th' bowndin' joy of his hairt, and blithely whistle 'Sweethairts and Waives.'

"That's reet, my braave lad, Captain Johnson would say, wi' a queer twinkle in his small gray eyes, dinnat fash thysen abawt speakin'; thy couldn't do mair wi' a foghorn to thy lips. Stick to "Sweethearts and Waives;" my lad; they're all th' joy and coomfort Jack hes afloat or ashore.'

"And then th' skipper would daive doon th' companionway, pull th' picture of his wife fram th' locker of his chest and kiss it tenderly. I've seen him do it a dozen taimes a daay.

"Well, on th' fowerth daay oot th' sky cam black arll at yance, and th' wind, which'd bin blawin' steadily abeam, dropped wi' a weird moan into th' bosom of th' ocean. Th' saales flapped clumsily

against th' masts wi' an uncanny sound, and there was a stillness and heaviness abawt th' air which struck every yane wi' fear.

" 'Arll hands close reef topsails," shouted th' skipper, and as th' men scampered oop the riggin', he said to th' maate: 'We're in for a stiff nor'easter or I'm a Dutchman.'

"This wor terrible news to me. There wor no signs of a gale to my maind, but I hed full faith in Captain Johnson's nautical wisdom, and I'd seen enuff of storms on th' German Ocean to know what to expect from a nor'easter. I wor in a fearful stew, and soom minnits efterwards th' skipper feawnd me on my knees in th' cabin prayin' as fast as my chatterin' teeth would let me.

" 'Git oop, thou lubber,' he said, giving me a cuff on th' lugs. 'This bean't no taim for prayin'! Thy plaace is on deck, where ivvery sailor owt to be just noo. Oop fram thy knees and bear a hand aloft, or I'll gie thee a taste of rope's end thou'll remember arll thy born daays.'

"I knew what a rope's endin' meant, and I wor on deck in a jiffey, summat ashaamed of bein' caught skulkin'. But there wor nowt for me to do. Ivvery-thing had bin maade snug and ship-shaape, and th'



crew wor gathered round th' galley spinnin' yarns abawt th' perils o' th' deap. My courage cam back as I listened to their rollickin' talk, and I sune lost arll dread o' th' comin' storm.

"We hadn't lang to waat for't. A low, sullen boom wor heard due east; th' heaviness in th' air wor suddenly relieved; th' sea, which for an hour hed bin black and almost motionless, wor stirred into long, swellin' rollers. Then, from th' thick, murky sky came a tremendous crash o' thunder; a fierce, howlin' blast was upon us like a flash; th' rain pelted down in big, angry drops, and th' heavy rollin' waves turned into furious breakers, snarlin' and foamin' at th' crests.

"Eh! but it wor a dreadful saight! Th' brig rocked and groaned in awful agony. Noo, she'd be quiverin' on th' top of a huge waave, and then she'd be strugglin' in th' trough, wi' th' angry sea swashing ower th' decks and th' blocks and tackle rattlin' laike mischief. We'd arll we could do to keep from washin' overboard. Captain Johnson wor lashed to th' wheel, clingin' to th' spokes laike grim deeth; but th' helm wor powerless to guide us amang the big blustering waves, which knocked th' brig abawt laike a cockle shell and swept th' decks wi'

a savage, hissing swiss, threatenin' ivvery minnit to crush us in their ponderous maws.

"For two daays we wor buffeted abawt at th' maircy o' th' gaale. No reckonin' could be tune; nayther th' skipper nor th' maate could tell where we wos. At last, on th' mornin' o' th' third day, land wor spied dead ayed. Th' storm had summat abaated and th' brig, laiike a spoiled youngster, wor answerin' sullenly to th' turns o' th' wheel. We had a little canvas on th' foremast; th' mizzen had gone by th' board th' day befoar. Th' wind, still gusty and fierce, wor apt to rip this saal in pieces at ony minnit, but it held oot; and in about half an hour we maade out the th' yedland of Hartpond Bay.

"It wor a welcoom discovery, but we arll knew th' danger of that treacherous coast, and hope trimbled fitfully in oor brists as, wi' gritted teeth and desperate maind, Captain Johnson tried to steer us safely through th' wild churning sea. Th' brig seemed disposed to behave hersen. There wor occasional lulls i' th' gaale, which quickened oor pulses, and th' waaves, while they still beat us stiffly seemed to be spending their force.

"But of a sudden th' tempest raged again as furiously as ivver; th' Rising Sun became onmanageable, and black despair tuk possession of oor hairts.

We wor driven nor'ard, past th' lighthouse, where we wor caught in an eddyin' swirl of waters which sucked us neerer th' gloomy ootlaine o' th' towerin' cliffs, which, we could see, were thronged wi' hundreds of folks watchin' and pityin' oor distress.

"It's arll oop, my braave lads," cried Captain Johnson in despair, leavin' th' wheel to faind temporary safety in th' foreriggin'; we're on th' rocks, and there's nobbut a rocket line betune us and deeth!"

"What my feelin's wor at this moment I nivver could descaibe. My nature seemed to hev bin chaanged by this awful crisis. I weren't frightened at th' prospect of deeth; th' thowt of bein' dashed to atoms on th' ugly black rocks, hoose points frowned fearfully through th' froth o' th' billows, didn't phaaze me. I wor wet through and through, and shiverin' like th' ague. But I didn't want to dee. A kaind of dull longin' for life cam over me. From th' companionway, where I'd lashed mysen in this dire extremity, I watched wi' a queer numb feelin' th' efforts o' th' coastguardsmen on th' cliffs above to send us a rocket line. I could hear the cries of pitying wimmin as th' angry waaves cam roarin' and swashin' ower th' deck.



"By this time we wor wedged tightly in a ridge between two darkling rocks. Th' cliff wor nobbut two cables awaay. Th' big waaves dashed agin oor portside laike batterin' rams, makin' th' starboard beams crunch on th' sharp teeth o' th' rocks. It wor nobbut a question of very little taime ere we'd be dashed to pieces i' that narrow ridge, and then God have maircy on oor souls. I thowt of my poor mother on th' fairm, and th' dull feelin' in my hairt gave waay to a fierce, intense yearnin' to be saved.

"Line after line fram th' cliffs swept past us to th' north. Once there wor a feeble cheer fram th' foremast, where th' skipper and crew were lashed, when a line came athwart th' riggin'. A ringin' cheer went oop fram th' folks ashore, but th' glad hope it inspired speedily died awaay; the line wor lost in soom onaccountable manner, and in another second th' mast crashed over oor starboard side, and captain and crew were dashed beneath th' waaves.

"This was th' supreme moment of my laife. Th' groan that followed from th' cliff chilled me to th' marrow. Would they try again? I thought I maun be invisible in th' companionway. I soofered

ivvery pang possible to monkind durin' th' next few seconds.

"But there wor another flash from the cliff; the whiz o' th' rocket maade my hairt leap into my mooth. Th' line cam clear across th' hull, a'most to my very feet. With a joyous cry I seized it and tugged on it for dear life.

"A shoot o' triumph cam fram th' cliffs as the coastguardsman felt th' laine tawten. That cry gave me new strength. I pulled wildly on th' line until the hawser cam aboard. I fastened it as best I could. Prisintly th' basket cam, but I didn't know hoo to work it.

"Reason was oot th' question at that critical time. I saw oanly yane chance to saave my life. I tied th' life-laine roond my my waist, cut awaay my lashins and sprang on th' hawser, intendin' to work hand ower hand to th' shore. I felt a sharp tug and knew no mair till I woke to consciousness on th' moor above surrounded by weepin' wimmen and kaindly men, and bruised and contused in ivvery part of my fraame.

"They towed me efterwards that I'd bin dragged through the foam' surge, across th' sharp, jutting

rocks, and oop th' side o' th' high and jagged cliff;  
and that it wor a miracle I reached th' top wi' a  
vestige of laife i' my body."



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CURSE OF RUM.

The narration of this terrible experience affected Captain Shiers deeply. His eyes filled with tears as he told of this miraculous escape from a dreadful death, and he took two or three turns around the room before recovering his composure. Reseating himself and charging his pipe again, he continued:

“The memory of that awful daay, lad, will be wi’ me till deeth. It wor a great maircy I wor spared to ask forgiveness of my poor mother, and it owt to hev bin a lesson to me for th’ rest o’ my laife. But it wor nowt o’ th’ kind. Of coorse I wor penitent for a time, and I shed bitter, scaldin’, remorseful tears when th’ owd lady cam to th’ hospital and helped to nurse back my strength. Arll she could do and saay, hooiver, couldn’t get me back to th’ fairm; th’ shipwreck hadn’t crushed my wilful, obstinate spirit, although it cured me o’ th’ hankerin, for a seafarin’ laife. I wor determined to learn a trade, and mother had fain to leave me wi’ Grand-faather Toplass, hoo kept a ship chandler’s shop in

Hartpond. Th' owd chap said he'd apprentice me to a watchmakker and put me i' th' waay of earnin' my livin' by th' taim I maun straike out for mysen. Hoo many times I regretted my stubbornness and wished I had gone back whoam to smoothe th' last hours of th' owd folks! But it weren't to be. Summot drives us forard in oor good and evil courses, roundin' oor life accordin' to th' fate shaped oot for us by th' Almighty. Lang befoar my time wor oot, both faather and muther wor called to their last restin' place. Th' farm wor sowd and proceeds put in trust for me, and I cam to luke upon Hartpond as my whoam, and to rely on Grandfaather Toplass for th' little counsel and direction I'd tak as to my future.

"Grandfaather wor a character, and my morals didn't prosper under his care. He wor one o' th' owd stamp of Yorkshire bits, shrewd and shaarp in tradin', but ower fond o' th' public hoose, where I used to go wi' him quite often and larned to tak' a nip wi' th' best of 'em. Hartpond wor a great place for tipplin'; gin and brandy wor loked on as cure-alls, and a pint of steamin' mulled yale, wi' yor feet in het watter and a blanket round yor yed, wor a prime receipt for infloenza. There wor nobbut

yan real oot-and-oot teetotaler i' th' toon; he wor an alderman by natural selection and a joiner by trade—a great mon at penny-readin's and lectures. His name wor Bridges, and the publicans said his cognomen explained ivverything, as wi'oot watter bridges wad be no use.

“Owd Tommy Toplass, as grandfaather wor called, could stand a power o' lush; but yance a moonth, just at change o' th' moon, it got away wi' his yed, and he'd maerch nine times round Billy Purvis' gravestone in th' owd churchyard, and then preambulate up and doon th' High Street yellin' like mad. Nobody tuk ony notice of his antics; they said he'd got a knock on th' yed durin' a smugglin' expedition when he wor young, and was to be pitied, poor mon, when th' fits cam on.

“Noo, wi' such a jockey, it weren't to be expected that my trainin' wad be uncommon good. I got to be real fond of toddy, and got fuddled at ivvery holiday. Then, to make things worse, I joined th' Rifle Band, which practiced in th' club room of a public, and we hed lots of taim for yale atween pieces, which th' bandmaister, who was fond of a jorum hissen, tuk pains should be short and trotty like a donkey's gallop.



"But I maun skip ower thoase times when I wor sowin' tares for a sorry reapin'. In due time I coorted and married. Thou has seen my lass, and knows that I got a good wife. She owt to hev wrought a chaange in ony mon, but her love and gentleness made no difference in me. I wor quick and smart in my trade, and made good money in a little shop; but in ivverythaing else I wor a fule and a broote, spendin' my neets at th' White Hart and goin' whoam wi' oaths on my lips and a mad wish to do soom desperate deed. Lizzie tried her haardest to wean me fram drink. She nivver uttered a haarsh word or a reproach; she browt coolin' draughts to me i' th' mornin' and coaxed my appetite wi' arll kinds o' tidbits; she talked to me gently and showed me plaan enuff that th' gait I wor goin' wad lead me to ruin and deeth. But it wor nō use; I knew she wor reet, and that I wor sinkin' plumb doon to th' gooter, but Owd Nick hed me tight in his clutches, and I laughed her to scorn. Efter Bob wor born I did sprooce up a bit; I rushed awaay when th' spells cam on and struggled wi' John Barleycorn like a good 'un. But John hed a fast grip on me; I fell time and agin, despite pledges and promises, and befoar Bob wor twelve months

owd I wor as oad as ivver. Lizzie loked for consolation i' th' church. It wor raar she murmured abawt th' misery of her lot' but th' saight o' th' Baible and prayer buke riled me like fury, and I pitched them oot o' doors scores and scores o' times.

"Then th' neebors began to talk. They wor arll drinkin' folks, but the stuff didn't tak howd o' them as it tuk howd o' me. I began to hev ragin' spells like grandfaather; I wad brood ower fancied troubles for daays, and then my mind wad boonce wi' excitement, and afterwards I wad hev queer shivverin' fits, which tuk arll my strength awaay, and doctor hed to gie me stuff to braace my system. Th' parson wad coom and pray wi' me, but I turned cowed shoulder to his advice; and by and by I wor left to my oan wicked devices, and folks said I maight go my oan gait to th' divvil.

"And sure enuff I wor on th' reet road to him. Lizzie's face, which bloomed like a rose when we wor wed, becam peaked and yellow; she dropped awaay to a shadow, and her bonny eyes, which used to dance wi' honest glee, faded into a dim haunted gleam, and lines of sooferin' furrowed her dimpled cheeks. She wor pinin' away, but I couldn't see it. As lang as I could get my two-pennorth's o' rum, I

had thowt for nowt else. Rum wor my God; it sup-  
planted wife and babby in my hairt; I varily believe  
that I'd have bartered my soul for a noggin o' grog.

"Things wor at this pass when an owd friend o'  
my wife's came to work i' th' town. He was a  
printer to traade, a soft-spokkin' chap, wi' th'  
smooth, artful ways of sooth countrymen, and hed  
got acquainted wi' Lizzie when she wor at service  
somewhere in Middlesex. Soom said he wor an  
owd sweethairt, and when they saw hoo pleased  
Lizzie wor to see him, they even said they'd been  
engaged and quarreled, and she'd married me to  
spite him. I paid no attention to such gossip at  
first; but when Lizzie began to twit me wi' th' stead-  
iness of Ned Barton—that wor his name—and said,  
wi' sighs in her throat, hoo happy we could be if I  
wor like him, th' devvil got into my hairt and I be-  
came as suspicious and jealous as that blackamore  
i' th' plaay hoo smothered his fair and virtuous  
young bride.

"Jealously, my lad, is a sad coompanion for a  
drinkin' mon. Lizzie wor as pure and honest as th'  
drivven snow; bad as I wor, she wor leal and true;  
nivver a wrong thowt entered her mind. Low and  
brootal as wor my waays, she loved me with that



endurin' love which is pairt o' th' soul of a true wooman. Fulelike, hooiver, I couldn't see it then. I magnified innocent actions into evil deeds; my rum-sodden brain was afire wi' foul thowts; ivery fiber o' my fraame throbbd wi' black and murderous jealousy.

"I watched for signs to inflame my passion. Deeper and madder I plunged in debauchery, and madder and deeper grew my wild and furious thowts. Th' drink began to hev a queer effect on me; it didn't make me bluster and stagger as formerly. I wor quieter i' my coops, and after my usual 'lowance, though my talk wor fairly rational and my actions natural enuff, I wor as unconscious of things abawt me as a child unborn. People used to tell me of straange things I did in this condition, and when I said I didn't remember, they'd shrug their showlders and say:

"That winnet do Jack; thou weren't full, and we don't want thou to mak' thysen a bigger leear than thou art."

"Things went on in this sad way for soom months, my hairt growin' savager towards Lizzie ivery daay, and buzzin' thowts of vengeance for soom imaginary

wrong crowdin' themsens in my maind. One mornin' efter comin' fram an early nip, wi'oot which I couldn't bring mysen to eat, I wor astoonded to see Lizzie wi' a black eye.

"'What's happened to thee, lass,' I asked surlily.

"She burst into tears and said:

"'Eh! John; thou knows. It has coom at last. I nivver thowt thou'd raise thy hand agin me. But it weren't thy fawt; it wor th' drink.'

"'Noo, as sure as I'm sittin' here, lad, I knew nowt abawt strikkin' that little wooman; and I couldn't believe then that I'd dune so. I thowt she wor deceivin' me for soom reason, and my anger rose and I cried savagely:

"'Does tha mean to saay that I struck tha?'

"'Yes, John,' she said, wi' a sad, pitiful strain in her voice, 'thou felled me to th' yearth efter callin' me ivery vile name under th' sun.'

"'Thou'rt a dommed leear,' I cried mad wi' raage; I may be fond of a sup, and mayhap sometimes I get full, but I nivver raised ma hand to thee. That's yan o' thy tricks to excuse thy doin's wi' that tramp, Ned Barton.'

“‘John, John,’ she shrieked, wi’ agony plainly written on her face; ‘doan’t say that when th’ art sober, lad. I’ve been a true and dutiful wife to thee, John. Tell me thou doan’t mean it.’

“‘Doan’t mean what?’ I sneered.

“‘What thou said last neet; that—that I wor too thick wi’ Ned Barton.’

“‘If I said that last neet, thou brazen huzzy, I cried, doublin’ ma fist and shaakin’ it in her faace; ‘if I said that I meant it and mair too. Domm thou! I’ve had enough o’ thy slobberin’, sneakin’ waays; thou’d better pack thy sen off wi’ that smooth-faced, oily-tongued lover afoar I do him some bodily hairm.’

“She dropped into a chair and moaned and turned as pale as deeth. Th’ divvil got in me at th’ saight of her white face and quiverin’ lips, and I stepped up to her, helpless and stricken as she wor by my foul chaarge, and struck her violently on th’ yed. As she fell senseless to th’ floor little Bob toddled oop and, claspin’ my knees wi’ his wee, chubby hands, cried:

“‘Oh! daddy, daddy! Doan’t beat mother.’



"I pushed him roughly awaay, and he fell sobbin' ower the prostrated body of my waife.

"In another moment I wor on my way to th' White Hart to fire my anger wi' mair rum."

## CHAPTER VII.

### CAPTAIN SHIERS GOES MAD.

"What happened efter I went in to th' White Hart tap-room I oanly knaw by hearsay. I remimber hevvin' two-three noggins o' rum, but iverything else wor a blank until I woak next mornin' on a cowl stone slab in th' toon jail. My tongue wor thick and paarched, my limbs weak and tottery, my hands dothered laike grass on th' moor.

"Well, I muttered to mysen, lukin' roond th' bare, grim cell disconsolately, 'thy's browt thy eggs to a fine mairket at last! Domm thysen for a fule, Jack Shiers!'

"Superintendent o' th' Police heard me movin' aroond and cam and loked through the graatin.'

"Hello! Dawson!" I cried, 'this is a nice trick to play on a man hoo allers pays his raates and owes neboday nowt. Send for a pint o' yale, I'm chokin.'

"He turned on me a luke I'll nivver forget; it wor a mixture of malignity and pity, and set me shaakin' warse than iver.

"Chokin! Thou greet big fule,' he cried, in a terrible voice; 'chokin! Happen thou'll choke sune enuff.'

"What does thou mean?' I asked, alarmed by his manner.

"Mean!' echoed he. 'I mean that thou'll swing sure as fate if he dees.'

"Dees!' exclaimed I, frightened a'most oot o' my wits; 'if hoo dees?'

"Thy bairn, thou chuckle-yedded broote,' he answered savagely; 'bonny little Bob, hoom thou stabbed in thy drunken fury,'

"Stabbed my Bob!' I cried excitedly. 'Coom, Dawson, noan o' thy cussed joakes noo. Doan't saay I stabbed Bob.'

"Luke at thy sleeves, thou bloodthirsty skoon-drel,' he exclaimed, impatiently. 'Does thou think I'd joak ower a cowdblooded murder?'

"I glanced at my airms; th' coat sleeves wor daubed wi' blood. Wi' a frightened yell I threw mysen on th' stone cot and tore my hair in a frenzy of remorse.

"Ay! thou may well raave,' cried th' officer, 'if we hadn't nabbed thou in time, happen thy wife



wad hev soofered in th' saam waay. Get oop, th' magistraates are waitin' for thee.'

"He unlocked th' door o' th' cell and led me to th' coort-room upstairs. Th' plaace wor crooded wi' toonfolk, and as I wor put i' th' dock an angry murmur went oop which th' crier tried haired to repress. I loked abawt me in a dazed fashion. There wor three magistrates on th' bench, men hoom I knew weel and had taken mony a drink wi'; but their faaces were set stern agin me noo, and my limbs trimbled so when they towd me to stand oop that a bobby hed to support me. Th' owd white-yedded toon clark read a chaarge of attempted murder and asked if I'd owt to say for mysen.

"I wanted to tell him that I wor innocent, but my tongue stuck to th' roof o' my mooth and not a word could I utter.

"'Let Officer Hopkins be sworn,' said the clark in a terrible voice.

"Hopkins came for'ard and kissed the buke. He wor an owd chum o' maine and I thowt surely he'd faavor me wi' a mairciful story. But I wor sadly mistakken. He began to swear awaay my laife as if I wor th' greatest straanger i' th' world. 'Your Honors' said he, touching his forelock politely, 'I

wor on my beat in Northgate at elivin o'clock last neet, when I heard cries o' murder comin' fram th' prisoner's hoose. I rushed in and fawnd prisoner's wife howdin' him by th' airms and screamin' like mad. In his right hand wor this knaife, which I produce.'

"Hopkins gave th' clark my jack-knaife and I shivered as I saw big splatches of blood on th' blaade.

"On th' bed wor prisoner's little lad wi' a graate gash in his left showlder,' pleeceman went on. 'Hoo did that?' I asked. 'John,' said prisoner's wife. I handcuffed him and took him to th' jail.'

"Did th' prisoner mak' ony staatment?' inquired the clark.

"'No, your Honors, he wor kaind o' stupefied when th' darbys wor put on, and he cam quietly enuff. I didn't ask him onythin', knowin' that it wor agin th' rools o' th' service.'

"'Quite reet, my man!' said th' Mayor; 'stand doon, and call Mrs. Shiers.'

"Lizzie wor lead to th' witness box in a faintin' state. Poor lass, it wor a haird trial for her—her hoosband i' th' dock charged wi' attemptin' to murder ovr oanly bairn, and she asked to gi'e evidence

that maight send him to th' gallows. Th' coort-room wor as still as th' grave when she began to speeak. Her voice wor low and shrinkin'; the story hed to be dragged fram her piecemeal. Ivery noo and then, she'd luke at me wi' brimmin' eyes and shaake laike dotherin' grass. Eh! lad, if iver mon on yearth soofered tortures o' th' dommed, I did as Lizzie's words dropped laike het coals on my quaakin' hairt.

" 'He didn't mean it, your worships,' she cried pitifully; 'it wor th' drink which crazed him. He's good and kaind when th' liquor is out of him; oh! he didn't meean it!'

" 'Yes, yes, my good woman,' said th' Mayor gently, 'but what induced this deadly outbreak? Tell us hoo it happened.'

" 'Well, sir,' sobbed Lizzie, 'John hed bin drinkin' arll day on an empty stomach. We hed a few words early i' th' mornin,' and he tuk the huff and wadn't eat his breakfast. He cam in close upon elivin last neet. His eyes wor starin' wild, and he cried, 'I've got th' villain at last; bring him oot or I'll brain thou and kill him efterward.' 'Hoo does thou meean?' I asked. 'That skoondrel, Ned Barton,' he shouted: 'he's in there!' He jumped to



th' bedroom door, and before I could stop him he oot wi' his knife and struck at little Bobby wi' it. Th' blood spouted ower th' coonterpaan, and I caught his hands and screamed, and—and—oh! that is arll I know.'

"She fell back in a fainting fit. It arll came on me laike a flash. I'd nursed my wrath until drunken madness seized me, and I'd stabbed my oan bairn, thinkin' he wor Ned Barton foulin' my sheets.

"The coort-room reeled befoar my eyes; a strange buzzin' noise wor in my ears; I clutched wildly at th' air and fell to th' floor wi' a shriek.

"When I cam to my senses I wor in Sedgefield Asylum. Th' attendants said I'd bin there eight years a raavin' lunatic.

" 'My waife and babby,' I cried, ' what's coom o' them?'

" 'They're in Lancashire,' said yan. 'Bob didn't dee, and thou's nearly cured. Thank God, my mon, and let drink aloan i' th' future.'

"In a few weeks they let me oot. Eight years of my laife had gone by in that madhouse—eight years completely blotted oot of memory, for iverything wor an utter blank fram th' taim I dropped i' th' prisoner's dock till th' daay they towed me I wor on th' road to mental health again."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LIFE IN LANCASHIRE.

Tears streamed down Captain Shiers' cheeks and, seemingly oblivious of my presence, he fell on his knees and offered up a fervent prayer, thanking God for restoring his reason and reuniting him to his wife and child. There was no doubting the man's devout nature. His gratitude sprang from a humble, contrite heart. Whatever he had been in the past—and his story was an awful revelation of human weakness and wickedness—it was plain that his spirit had undergone a wonderful change for the better. He seemed the embodiment of a trusting, faithful servant of the cross as he knelt praising God for his infinite mercy to a penitent sinner.

“That’s my story, lad,” he said, after rising from his knees, “and thou can oonderstand hoo much I hev to be thankful for and hoo graate is the debt I hev to pay to th’ Lord. My punishment wor severe, but I deserved it arll. It tak’s a power o’ scourgin’ to break soom folks in. I had to be browt to th’ foot o’ the scaffold befoar my stubborn sinful hairt

wor brokken. That shipwreck wor bad enuff, but it wor a flea-bite compared to th' predicament which rum and passion put me in."

"'How did you come to join the Salvationists?'" I asked.

"'I'll tell thee. Efter leavin th' asylum I hunted oop Lizzie. She left Hartpond becos of th' painful associations, and went to Wigan, where she wor maintainin' hersen and Bob by dressmakin'. Mony a wooman wad hev severed arll connection wi' me, but she's yan o' thoase hoo stick to a mon till deeth. Ivery moonth she wrote to the asylum abawt me; she'd abidin' faith that I wad coom oot arll reet and mend my waays. I woan't attempt to descriabe oor meetin' after thoase eight weary, dreary years. On my knees I asked her forgiveness, and pledged mysen to keep from th' cursed drink. Her loanli-niss and soofferin' hed browt her near to Christ; she wor a Sunday-skule teacher and a member o' th' Methodist Church. 'John,' said she, thou'll nivver stick unless God is on thy saide; ask him to bless thy endeavors'. I'd nivver prayed sin I wor a babby, but I began noo. It seamed laike gropin' i' th' dark for a lang while. I had dull spells and doubtin' spells, and th' waay often loked black and



gloomy. But I persevered, and finally th' light broak in upon me. Eh! but it wor a blessed moment when I felt sin drop from my hairt, and th' peace and joy which passeth arll understandin' filled my soul.

"Wigan wor a ruff and wicked plaace. There's thoosands o' pitmen there and th' drinkin' and swearin' and fightin' is awful on pay days. Wommin dress themsens in troosers and work i' th' pits wi' th' men, and they go drinkin' wi' them on Saturday neets. No pitman is happy unless he has either a bloody nose or a brokken yed by midnight. Why, their wives leave them at th' publics while they go marketin', and just abawt cloasin' time th' wommin luke in th' tap-rooms and saay:

" 'Jack, hes thou foughten yet?'

"And if Jack says 'naw,' they cry oot:

" 'Then get foughten, lad, and coom whoam.'

"There'd be no peace wi' lots of them on Sunday unless Saturday neet finished wi' a row. Well, th' Salvation Army came to Wigan efter I wor saaved and began to work among the pitmen. I went to yan o' th' meetin's and felt mysen drawn on th' platform. I towd the story o' my laife in language they arll knew. Wommin began to cry and men

cam forard and praayed. I saw that God had given me a work to do. 'Lizzie,' I said to my wife, I'm mainded to go wi' the airmy; what does thou saay? 'It's God's dooin', was her reply. 'I'll go wi' thee.' And from that daay to this we've worked together in th' holy cause. It hesn't all bin smooth and pleasant; often we've bin sair pressed for victuals and a place to sleep, and half a dozen times we've bin in jail; but the Lord is wi' us arlways' and crackers and cheese wi' a thankful hairt is sweeter than th' stalled ox in th' tents o' th' unrighteous.

"Two years ago they asked for volunteers for America, and Lizzie and Bob and mysen cam to help carry on th' good work. We faind it a little different here. People laugh at oor straange tongue and saay wi mak' a pantomine o' religion. Oor waays are mebbe not orthodox, but oor hairts glow wi' love o' the gospel, and thoosands hev followed oor drums to salvation. That's arll I need saay, lad. I've given thou my history fram th' cradle to th' presint time, and if thou cam here thinkin' I wor masqueradin' wi' wicked, hypocritical desaigns, thou maun admit noo, like a mon, that thou'rt mistakken."

I assured Captain Shiers that this account of himself was perfectly satisfactory and that I would

take pleasure in refuting any statement that might in any way reflect on his character.

"That's spokken fairly, lad," he cried in his honest, hearty fashion, "and I thaank thee. Noo, thou'll stop and tak' pot-luck wi' us; sooper's just abawt riddy."

"Pray excuse me, Captain," I said, "I must be at the office before 7 o'clock."

"Well, thou'rt welcome, lad, if thou hes time. At any raate, thou maun see Bob."

He went to the sitting-room door and shouted.

"Coom here, Bob."

A fine, yellow-haired, blue-eyed lad of fourteen entered the room in response to the call. His face had a happy blending of his father's frank features and his mother's gentle refinement. His left arm hung listlessly at his side. Captain Shiers observed me looking at it and he said significantly:

"Yes, that's it; but Bob's arll reet otherwise. Shaake hands wi' this gentleman, lad; he's one o' thoase chaps that write for th' paapers."

The boy came forward and extended his hand with a pleasant smile and, with a voice resembling his mother's, said:



"I'm very glad to see you, sir. I'm studying hard to become a writer myself, sir.

"And what do you intend to write about, Bob?" asked I.

"About poor people and their ways, sir."

"That's reet, my lad," said Captain Shiers, his face beaming with fatherly affection. "Allers try and help th' poor; th' rich can tak' care o' themselves."

As I took my hat to leave the Salvationist remarked:

"I'm worried abawt that poor wooman, lad. I hope she'll faind her hoosband, and that th' Lord will sustain her soul to bear meekly her great affliction.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE REPORTER WRITES AN ARTICLE.

"How did you make out, James?" asked the city editor when I returned to the office. "Is it a sensation or a fizzle?"

"A little of both," was my reply. "Mrs. Toplass is the woman who fainted at the meeting and claimed Captain Shiers as her long-lost husband. She acknowledges having been unduly excited by the man's remarkable resemblance to Toplass, but is apparently satisfied that she was mistaken and simply overpowered by her feelings. She is annoyed by the discovery of her identity, and pleaded hard for the suppression of her name in any further mention of the affair. The likeness of Shiers to a portrait of Toplass which hangs in the parlor at—Prairie avenue is wonderful. But Shiers and his wife tell a straightforward story; he gave me his history from his boyish days to the present moment, speaking unreservedly of a past which is by no means a creditable one. The man, however, is undoubtedly earnest and sincere in his present work;

he speaks and acts like a conscientious, God-fearing man, who has repented of the error of his ways and is striving hard to expiate past shortcomings by an upright and sober life."

"He has evidently made a deep impression on you," remarked the city editor, with a smile.

"He most assuredly has, sir, for I never met a man in his circumstances and calling with less cant and pretensions or more manliness and simple piety. Shiers is a character well worth studying."

I gave a rapid sketch of the man's career, indicating as best I could Captain Shiers' open and graphic manner of narration.

"That's mighty good stuff," said the city editor, who was profoundly interested, "but it isn't live news' and we can't spare the space just now for an old story, however spicy. Keep it in mind, though, it will make a good special some day. Write up enough about last night's affair to show that we are acquainted with the inside facts, and keep your promise to Mrs. Toplass; it would be cruel to bring her personally before the public in view of all she has gone through. It wouldn't be amiss to keep track of Shiers and her; Toplass may turn up yet,



and then you'd have a splendid chance to work out a rattling sensation."

The article I wrote was as follows:

Cases of mistaken identity are common enough in police court annals, but it is not often that they occur in society circles or affect the status of leaders of religious movements. The exciting episode at the meeting of the Salvation Army on Monday night was the subject of wide comment yesterday. The members of this peculiar sect have laid themselves open to adverse criticism by reason of their grotesque proceedings on the public streets and in their barracks. All manner of opprobrious remarks have been made concerning their character and conduct, and it only needed an incident of this kind to emphasize the growing dislike the noisy band has aroused in the public mind. Numbers of persons chuckled over the scandal implied in the hysterical declaration of the unknown lady that Cspain Shiers, the energetic leader of the Salvation Army, was her husband. The fact that one of the sisters was married to Captain Shiers gave additional zest to the situation. A reporter carefully investigated the matter yesterday, and, while the result is interesting, it is only fair to state that the

suspicion directed against Captain Shiers and his estimable wife is wholly unfounded. The lady who disturbed the meeting moves in the highest circles of society. Two or three years ago her husband, a prominent citizen of Chicago, disappeared in a strange and unaccountable manner, and despite vigorous search and diligent inquiry not a clue was obtained as to his fate or whereabouts. Captain Shiers has the good or bad fortune to resemble the missing man in a startling degree. The likeness, however, extends only to form and face; the difference between the two men in conversation, manner, and history is as wide as the poles. Some one informed the sorrowing lady of the strange likeness; she attended the meeting out of curiosity, and, in a moment of intense nervous excitement, excusable and natural under the circumstances, she was betrayed into making the startling assertion that at last her long-lost husband was found. "I am thoroughly convinced of my mistake," she said to the writer yesterday afternoon, "and am truly sorry if Captain Shiers is caused any annoyance by my unfortunate conduct. He will no doubt pardon me when he learns how my feelings overpowered me and my heart cried out in the very ecstasy of woe."

Captain Shiers was indubitably correct in stating that he never saw the unfortunate woman before. In the course of a long interview yesterday evening he gave the reporter a detailed account of a career as remarkable for exciting and dramatic incidents as was ever set forth in modern romance. Whatever may be thought of the strange service of the Salvation Army, there is no doubt that in Captain Shiers it possesses a leader whose simple, honest piety and manly frankness would reflect credit on a minister of any recognized denomination.

Just as I was finishing work that evening a note was handed me from Captain Shiers. It read:

DEAR MR. BURBANKS:—Lizzie and I have talked over the affair of that poor lady, and she thinks that perhaps she will never be satisfied until I personally convince her that I am not her husband. My wife is a tender little woman, with keen, active sympathies, and I've no doubt she is right on this, as she is on every other subject. Therefore, if you deem it proper, I would like you to arrange for me to have an interview with Mrs. Toplass. No harm can possibly spring from our meeting, and probably the Lord will direct it to some good end. Please tell



the messenger when I can see you, and oblige your obedient servant and brother, JOHN SHIERS.

This request struck me as singular, but understanding that Captain Shiers was a man whose habits and thoughts did not run in ordinary channels, I sent word for him to meet me next morning, when we would discuss the advisability of the proposed interview with Mrs. Toplass.

## CHAPTER X.

### NEWS OF A LONG LOST UNCLE.

"No doot," said Captain Shiers when we met next morning, "no doot thou thinks my request strange, and mebbe it is a bit oot o' th' common, but I cannot let mysen rest till I see that poor lady and show her conclusively that I am not her husband. My waife says it is a duty I owe to society; she says th' wooman is brooding over her great sorrow, and mebbe her mind will give waay unless summat be dune to put it into a healthier channel. So, my lad, I'd like thou to tak me to her at yance."

I was not sure that any good result would follow a meeting of this kind, but the man was so earnest in his desire for an interview that I consented to mention the matter to Mrs. Toplass.

"I have an appointment with the lady," said I; "you can accompany me and I will ascertain if she will receive you."

"Arll reet," said he; "I know she'll see me."

"What makes you so confident?"

"Becos Lizzie towed me she wad; she's nivver mistakken where a wooman's hairt is concerned."

The man had unbounded faith in his wife's wisdom, and the thought struck me that Mrs. Shiers had suggested the meeting for some secret purpose of her own. It was hard to conceive this sincere, trustful little woman capable of any deceit, but it did seem singular that she should advise Captain Shiers to seek an interview with Mrs. Toplass. What could be her object? She could not suspect her husband of duplicity of any kind; her calm, peaceful eyes forbade any suspicion of jealousy or concealment. She had a motive undoubtedly, but for the life of me I could not determine what it was, and why my mind instinctively rejected the explanation Captain Shiers gave.

The friend whom Mrs. Toplass told me she would visit lived near Garfield Park. We took the Madison street cars. On our way out Captain Shiers did not talk much; he was in a quiet, contemplative mood, his mind probably busy with the prospective interview. He acquiesced in my suggestion that he remain at a convenient place in the neighborhood until I learned how the lady entertained the idea of receiving him.



I found Mrs. Toplass nervous and excited. She thanked me for suppressing her name from the article and eagerly listened to my account of Captain Shiers and his wife.

"You have no doubt, then," she said, "that Captain Shiers is the man he claims to be?"

"None at all," I replied. "He is a manly, simple-hearted fellow, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his work, and apparently incapable of duplicity or deceit. He is very anxious to meet you, so that any lingering suspicion you may have as to his identity may be removed."

The lady turned a shade paler, and her lips trembled as she said, hesitatingly:

"Such a meeting would be painful, I am afraid. The man is so like Henry." Then, with a sudden turn of resolution, she added:

"Well, perhaps it would be well to set all doubts at rest."

"Pardon me," I said, "do you doubt the man's story?"

"I cannot explain myself," she replied, "everything is so strange and bewildering. I was becoming reconciled to my loneliness when fate took me to that meeting. Oh! it was cruel, cruel! To see

him so near after all these dreary years of waiting, and then to rudely awaken from the brief dream of bliss. It was cruel, cruel!"

She began to cry, but when I intimated that she might decline the interview, she quickly dried her eyes, and remarked with forced composure:

"Oh, no! I will see Captain Shiers. A few words with him will probably steel my heart for the future. When will it be convenient for him to call?"

"He is in the neighborhood, madam; if agreeable I can bring him now."

A slight shudder passed over the woman's frame, but there was renewed steadiness in her voice as she replied:

"Yes, the sooner it is over the better. I will receive him here, and I will deem it a favor, Mr. Burbanks, if you will be present during the interview."

Of course I gladly consented to this arrangement. Mrs. Toplass' manner convinced me that she was still unsatisfied, and that something interesting might be expected from the meeting. I went for Captain Shiers, who was awaiting me with ill-concealed impatience in a livery stable.

"Well, lad?" he queried, in an anxious tone.

"Mrs. Toplass has consented to see you," I responded. "She is still a little excited, and I would advise you to be careful not to wound her feelings in any way."

"Nivver fear, lad," he said cheerily; "I'll saay nowt that'll harm her in ony waay."

Mrs. Toplass was rocking herself in an easy chair in the parlor when we entered. She rose somewhat unsteadily, and I noticed her clutch at the bosom of her dress when Captain Shiers, in his Salvation Army uniform, stood bowing awkwardly before her. The light from the windows fell on her face, which was slightly flushed; her lips were drawn tightly together, but her large mournful eyes were steadier than I had seen them before. It was evident she had nerved herself for the trying ordeal.

Captain Shiers face took on a strange, puzzled expression as he looked at the woman. His lips twitched uneasily, and I thought he started as their eyes met. This may have been fancy, however; my senses were strung to their highest tension as I had a presentiment that, in some way or other, the interview would have a sensational ending.



Mrs. Toplass was the first to speak. There was a perceptible quiver in her voice as she said:

"Pray be seated, gentlemen."

The Salvationist took a chair at the side of the window directly opposite to where Mrs. Toplass sat. I seated myself on the lounge, where I could watch the faces of both.

After an awkward pause Mrs. Toplass said:

"I owe you an apology, Captain Shiers, for any annoyance my presence at the meeting caused you. It was an unfortunate mistake, and I pray you to pardon it."

Her eyes were fixed steadily on his face as she spoke. I thought there was a peculiar emphasis in her voice; my imagination may have been again at fault. But there was no mistake about the troubled, half-frightened air with which the man glanced furtively at her, and his voice seemed to have lost its honest, sturdy ring as he replied:

"Doan't apologize to me, ma'am. This mon has explained iverything. I thowt you'd mebbe laike to see me to satisfy yoursen that it wor your feelin's carried you awaay. Lizzie—that's my waife—said it wor a sensible and proper thing to do, for of coorse, when you saw and talked wi' me, it wad be

plainer still that you wor mistaken, and kind o' ease your maind."

Mrs. Toplass listened with a pained look; she never once removed her eyes from the man's face, and her steady gaze seemed to disconcert him. He was unmistakably uneasy, and the unfavorable opinion which had been forming in my mind since the introduction gathered strength from his awkward manner.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Toplass, sighing slightly though her voice was firm; "it was very kind and considerate of you. I need not tell you how your appearance deceived me; you are very like, and yet unlike my poor husband. You have the same deep tone in speaking, but he did not talk like you, and he was a Yorkshireman too."

"Indeed, ma'am," exclaimed Shiers, "what mowt his given name be?"

"Henry," replied Mrs. Toplass.

"Henry!" echoed the man in surprise; "Henry! Why I had an uncle named Henry Toplass; he wor very little owder than me."

"Could he have been my husband?" cried the lady excitedly.

"Hardly, ma'am," was the reply with a solemn shake of the head, "he wor lost at sea nigh on twenty years ago."

"Ah!"

There was bitter disappointment in this ejaculation. The slight hope raised by the similarity of names was dashed ruthlessly to the ground. Still Mrs. Toplass struggled to revive it.

"Can you tell me something of his history?" she asked, anxiously.

"There is little to tell, ma'am. He wor my grandfather's youngest son, and wor born at Ripon a little betoar my mother wor married. He wor a wild, restless kind of a chap, and ran awaay to sea efter he left th' grammer skule. He wor maate of a ship which wor lost wi' arll hands on her way to Valparaiso in 1856. Noo I mention it, I'm remindéd that folks used to saay I wor th' living image of him."

"Might not some one have been saved from the wreck?" queried the lady, in the same anxious tone.

"No; that seems impossible, ma'am; th' ship wor reported lost in midocean durin' a severe storm. Not a soul was ivver heard of. Besides, ma'am,



supposin' Uncle Harry wor saaved, doan't you think he'd bin mon enuff to let th' owd folks know? We Yorkshire folks are ruff, ma'am, but we beant so bad as that."

"True! true!" cried Mrs. Toplass, with deep dejection in her voice, and then added suddenly:

"But my Henry went away and has never been heard of."

"Yes, ma'am, and a very sad caase, too, I'm towd," responded Shiers with feeling and a touch of his old manner, which I was pleased to observe.

"And," continued the lady in a peculiar tone, "he was born at Ripon in Yorkshire."

"You doan't say so!"

Shiers was plainly bewildered by this statement. His eyes opened wide in amazement and his breath came quick and hard.

"You doan't say so!" he repeated, with an awe-struck inflection.

"It is true!" cried Mrs. Toplass, with renewed symptoms of excitement; "and, what is more, his father's name was Thomas Toplass and he was in the ship supply business at Hartpond."

"My conscience!" exclaimed the man, springing up and seizing her by the hands; "can it be that Uncle Harry was saaved and thou'rt his wife?"

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SCAR ON HIS FOREHEAD.

It almost passed comprehension that in her search for her husband, Mrs. Toplass should find his nephew and confound him with the missing man; it was equally strange that the discovery of the nephew should lead to news of an uncle long since mourned as dead. One might search the realms of curious circumstances in vain for a parallel case. I was delighted with this sudden and unexpected turn of affairs, which bade fair to expand into a rich and rare sensation.

Mrs. Toplass received this emotional outburst of her putative nephew with outward composure. She must have been prepared for something of the sort, for I had held back no important item in my hurried recapitulation of the exciting incidents in Captain Shiers' career. I thought it strange that she did not give me some hint of the relationship which she must at once have seen existed between her husband and Captain Shiers. Her manner led me to believe that she agreed to the interview with

the simple purpose of removing all doubts as to the honesty and good faith of the Salvationist. But I had no time to analyze her motives; the situation was dramatically interesting, and it mattered little whether it was totally unlooked for or cunningly contrived for some hidden object.

Quietly releasing herself from the man's hearty grasp Mrs. Toplass said:

"Let us compare notes a little further, Captain Shiers. Perhaps it will smooth things if I relate what I know of my husband's past."

"Most certainly it will, ma'am," said the Salvationist, resuming his seat. "I'm arll at sea, noo. Eh! but it wad hev bin grate news for grandfaather before he deed. Think on it, ma'am; we arll thought Uncle Harry wor deed and gane. Why, there's a yedstane to his memory in St. Hilda churchyard wi' some poetry on it abawt th' dangers of thoase who go down to th' sea in ships. Hoo did he manage to escape?"

"I first met Mr. Toplass at an entertainment given by the St. Andrew's society," began the lady, settling herself in the chair and again fixing her large eyes on Captain Shiers, who still fidgeted a little under their steady look. "He was introduced



by a mutual friend, and we danced together several times ere the party broke up. I was greatly pleased with his manner and conversation; he was smilingly frank and open, and gave me the impression of a cultured and honorable man. He asked permission to call upon me and I consented. His pleasant, genial ways soon made him a favorite with my parents, and I could not help admiring his noble, manly qualities. We fell in love and were married after a courtship of six months. Mr. Toplass had only been in Chicago about a year, but he had been very successful in business and was able to go to housekeeping in comfortable style. We rented a flat on Wabash avenue at first, but his affairs prospering rapidly in the course of a year my husband built the house on Prairie avenue where I now live with my two children.

"Mr. Toplass had been very reticent about his past, merely stating that he was an Englishman of humble parentage, and that he was estranged from his relatives for a reason he did not care to explain. I was perfectly satisfied with this account; he was all a woman could wish as a husband—kind and devoted—and the universal respect with which he was regarded in the business community was proof of

his urbanity and integrity. After little Harry was born he talked more freely and seemed anxious to communicate with his relatives, but he kept postponing the matter, and up to the time of his disappearance he had not written the long-deferred letter of reconciliation. He told me that he was born at Ripon, Yorkshire; that his father was Thomas Toplass, of Hartpond; that he had one sister who was married to a farmer, but I do not remember his mentioning the name of her husband."

"That wad be my mother," interrupted Captain Shiers with moistened eyes.

Mrs. Toplass paid no heed to this remark, but went on with a composure that struck me as singular:

"He said that he had received a fair education, and was intended for a veterinary surgeon, but that there was Norse blood in his veins and he could not settle on land, and that, despite the entreaties of his parents, he went on board ship and spent several years as a sailor. His last voyage was as mate of the Honduras, which sailed from Liverpool for South America in April, 1856."

"The very ship," exclaimed Captain Shiers. "Eh! but this is strange!"

"He told me of the storm and shipwreck, stating that he contrived to get in a small boat when the Honduras foundered, and was washed about for three days before being rescued by a Norwegian bark, which landed him at Galveston, Texas. Tired of the sea after this rough experience he looked about for work on shore, and obtained a situation as hotel porter. He saved money in that humble calling, and began trading on a small scale. Everything prospered with him, and he soon owned a store similar to that of his father in Hartpond. When the war broke out he removed North, and was in business in New York and Boston. The roving spirit took possession of him again, but it did not draw him to sea this time; he drifted about the country for years, and finally located in Chicago, and went into business as a commission merchant. This is all I know of my husband's history, sir. We lived happily, ah! so happily together. There never was a better man—so true, so gentle, so loving. Our home was a joyous one until that sad day he dropped suddenly out of our lives, snapping the cord of our happiness, making the days blank and



dreary and the nights full of gloom and desolation. Never was woman so wretched as I. Oh! Henry! where are you now?"

In an instant the woman's composure left her, and she moaned and sobbed as though her heart was breaking. Moved by her grief Captain Shiers took her hands gently and compassionately.

"Cheer oop, ma'am," he said with manly tenderness; "We arll have our griefs in this world. The Lord will surely lighten thine. Cheer oop, happen Uncle Harry will coom back again, and th' reunion will be brighter and happier than hairt can conceive."

She let her hands rest quietly in his; her sobs grew fainter; hope and love gleamed in her brimming eyes.

"Yes! yes!" she cried; "he will come back. God will not let him remain away forever. He will come back to his children and me."

"That's reet," said the man, "hope on, hope ivver; its a blessed soothin' thing to hope."

The woman looked in his face with hungry, yearning eyes; her bosom heaved, and with a wild, convulsive sob, she threw herself on his breast, crying:

"O Henry! Thank God, you have come."

"Captain Shiers drew back with a horrified expression. She clung to him passionately.

"Why, oh! why do you spurn me, Henry, my husband?"

"My good wooman," faltered the man, looking amazedly in her face; "my good wooman, why this madness."

"No, no," she cried in beseeching tones; "I am not mad, Henry; only hungering for your love again."

He looked at me in bewilderment, muttering something I could not make out. Mrs. Toplass passed one hand rapidly over his forehead, crying:

"I'm not mad; I'm not deceived. See, there is the scar caused by a falling block. Oh! Henry, do not deny your own wife!"

On the man's brow, partially hidden by the hair, was a white scar. Captain Shiers staggered backward as she pointed to it. He was pale and trembling and big drops of perspiration gathered on his forehead.

"What can this mean?" he cried huskily.

"It means that you are Henry Toplass, my husband."

The soft pleading tones had left her voice. She drew herself to her full height, and scorn flashed from the eyes erst while bathed in pitiful tears.

"It means, also, that you are a craven wretch," she cried; "a base impostor, a cowardly deserter of wife and children."

"Unsaay thy words, ma'am," said Captain Shiers in a trembling voice; "as God is my judge, thou'rt mistaken and crazed with thy sorrow."

"As God is your judge and mine," she retorted with increasing scorn, "you are my miserable, worthless, despicable husband. Go to your wanton! Go!"

She pointed to the door. The man's head dropped before her flashing eyes. He glanced timorously at me and left the room with a sorrowful, dejected air.

Mrs. Toplass fell wailing on the floor.



## CHAPTER XII.

### FOREBODINGS OF TROUBLE.

For a time I was stunned by this termination of the interview. Mrs Toplass had acted strangely from the first. She was cool and excited by turns; at one time she seemed to put implicit confidence in Captain Shiers' story; at another her language denoted extreme skepticism. She tacitly sanctioned the impression that Henry Toplass was the man's uncle, and then, veering like the wind, claimed Shiers as her husband in the face of powerful evidence that he was her nephew.

Was the woman's brain affected? Or had she, with subtle feminine perception, penetrated a disguise that deceived even a reporter in quest of a sensation? Was Captain Shiers, the honest manly fellow I believed him, or was he the base scoundrel Mrs. Toplass denounced?

The case was growing more and more complicated. There was evidently method in her madness, if the woman was mad. Affording him every chance to declare himself, slowly revealing the agony of

her spirit in her relation of past happiness, the exposure of the scar was a masterstroke to bring the man to her feet—a conscience-stricken supplicant for forgiveness. That failing, her heart revolted, the man became an object of scorn and loathing, and she cast him off forever with that last passionate exclamation.

But could Captain Sheirs, or any one with the common feelings of humanity, stand calmly in the presence of a deserted wife and solemnly reject her tearful claims for sympathy and love? His uneasiness during the interview, the half-frightened air with which he met her gaze, the dejected manner in which he slunk away, were strong points against him; but what object could he have in leaving a comfortable home and prosperous business, in renouncing social standing and domestic peace and allying himself to a lowly band of religionists who often depended upon the scant offerings of impoverished followers for the bare necessities of life?

Was there a skeleton in the Toplass closet? Had Mrs. Toplass a dread secret of connubial sorrow locked in her bosom? Was Mrs. Shiers, who proposed this meeting, an honest woman or had she

guilty knowledge of the true position of the man she proudly called husband?

These and kindred thoughts crowded upon me; my mind was burdened with perplexity as I raised the sobbing woman from the floor. She thanked me in a feeble voice and bade me leave her.

"My heart is crushed she wailed in piteous tones. "That man is my husband; he denies and scorns me to live a life of sin with a dissolute woman. Oh! why can't I die!"

It was no time to question the women. Her eyes glistened wildly through the tears; the veins throbbed on her brow, and her breath came in quick convulsive gasps.

I rang for assistance, and with a partial explanation of the cause of the seizure I left the house to follow Captain Shiers. Only a few moments had elapsed since he departed, but he was nowhere in sight. Taking a car east on Madison street I got off at Halsted street and hurried to his house.

Mrs Shiers responded to my knock at the door. There were deep circles around her eyes and other traces of sorrow in her sweet, womanly face.



"Come in, sir, she said, with a smile; "strange things have happened since John went out this morning."

I entered the shabby little sitting room. On the lounge lay a man in a pitiable condition. His eyes were bloodshot, white flecks of froth were on his lips, his face was bleared and blotched with dissipation, his hands and feet twitched incessantly. His clothes were torn and bespattered with mud, and hideous moans came through his chattering teeth. There was no mistaking the fellow's plight; he was in the first stage of delirium tremens.

"I found him in the gutter this morning," said Mrs. Shiers, answering my questioning look. "How sad and strange it is! A few years ago he was well dressed, sober and healthful—a man whose appearance inspired confidence and respect. And see him now!"

She bestowed a look of mingled pity and disgust on the shaking wretch.

"You know him, then?" I queried.

"Yes; he is Edward Barton, a friend of ours in the old country."

"Edward Barton!" exclaimed I, in amazement; "why that is the man whom—"

She touched my arm warningly and responded:

"Yes, you know the story, but don't refer to it now, please."

There was need of the warning, for at the mention of his name the man raised himself on his elbows and shrieked:

"They're coming! Oh! They're coming! Save me, save me!"

Mrs. Shiers went to his side and stroked his head gently. His fear subsided under her sympathetic touch. The frightened expression died on his face and he sank weakly down on the couch, muttering:

"Keep them away; don't leave me!"

"She gave him a spoonful of medicine from a bottle and motioned me out of the room. I went into the kitchen where Mrs. Shiers soon joined me.

"He is easier now," she said. "I called in a doctor as soon as I got him up stairs. He says the poor fellow is in a critical state, but that careful nursing will bring him round."

"And you have undertaken to nurse him?"

"Certainly, sir; I could not leave him to die on the street."

"But your husband—how will he tolerate him under the same roof?"

She looked surprised at the question.

"Ah! sir!" she said softly, "you forget that John is a changed man. The love of God takes all malice and hatred and jealousy out of the heart, and fills it with peace, good will and loving kindness to all mankind. John will aid me to reclaim that poor, sinful man."

"And you have no misgiving that the old anger will return?"

"No, sir," was the reply, with one of those sweet tender smiles which gave a saint-like glory to her face; "our new life has taught us to be charitable and help the afflicted. John would never forgive me if I turned my back on Ned Barton now that he is in need of pity and tender care."

Here indeed was Christianity manifesting itself in good works. I began to hate myself for harboring vile suspicion against this calm, trustful, helpful little woman.

"Where is Captain Shiers?" I asked.

"I was about to ask you that question, sir. He went out this morning to keep an appointment with you, I understood."

"Yes, we met, but he left Mrs. Toplass in advance of me, and I expected to find him at home."



"Something may have detained him," she said quietly; "How did you find that poor lady?"

I hesitated before replying. Would it be prudent to enlighten her as to that strange interview? I thought it advisable to let her husband give her the particulars, and merely replied:

"She is very much excited."

"It must have been a very trying ordeal," said Mrs. Shiers, in a tone of deep sympathy. "But she'll be better and more resigned after being thoroughly convinced of her mistake."

"But," I could not help responding, "but she is not convinced."

"Not convinced!" she exclaimed nervously, "why, she surely does not think now John is her husband."

"I am afraid she does, madam," said I.

"How sad."

"Mrs. Shiers shook her head mournfully; she seemed to think grief had bereft the poor lady of her senses. I was about to reply when Captain Shiers' step was heard on the stairs. His wife's face lightened up when she heard the familiar sound. She went to the landing to meet him. I heard her

whisper something about the sick man in the sitting room and then they came into the kitchen together.

Captain Shiers' face was clouded. He started nervously and glanced anxiously at his wife as he saw me.

"Has he tow'd thou?" he asked huskily.

"Told me what?" inquired Mrs. Shiers.

"What that wooman said."

His voice was still thick and the troubled look deepened.

"No, Mr. Burbanks has told me nothing."

"I thank thee, lad," he said to me; "its better my lass should hear th' story fram my oan lips."

Mrs. Shiers glanced anxiously at the man and cried:

"Thou's in trouble, John; what is it?"

"Get me my pipe," he said, assuming a lighter tone; "if iver I wanted a bit o' 'bacca it's noo."

His wife brought pipe and tobacco from the sitting room.

"Sit thee doon, lass, and listen to as straange a tale as wor iver towld i' th' fairy bukes."

He lighted his pipe, his brow clearing a little under the influence of the narcotic and related what had occurred with great fidelity to detail. His wife

listened intently and was visibly perturbed during the narration.

"That scar!" she cried, "how could she know of that scar?"

"God oanly knows," replied the husband; "it puzzles me sairly. That mark wor put on my broo when I wor dragged oop th' cliffs o' Hartpond Moor. Happen Uncle Harry had a scar there."

"Then you think your uncle was her husband?" I queried.

"I divven't know what to think. We arll thowt he wor at th' bottom o' th' Atlantic. Mebbe he wor saaved, as she said, but my yed's arll muddled. Yance I thowt I'd seen her befoar."

"Seen her before the meeting?" exclaimed Mrs. Shiers.

"Yes, lass; there wor a luke on her face which wor familiar, and sometaimes her voice rang in ma ears wi' a likely soond. Why of coorse (speaking with sudden inspiration, it seemed) they wor familiar!"

His wife and I regarded the man with intense surprise; his sparkling eyes gave evidence of a glad discovery.



"That's it," he cried, animatedly, pointing to Mrs. Shiers; "luke, lad, it wor her face and her voice I heerd."

I looked at the little anxious woman, and sure enough there was an expression about her eyes and mouth which recalled the sorrowful face of Mrs. Toplass. It was a fleeting, flickering resemblance which was gone almost ere it could be defined; it gleamed fitfully in her eyes when pity or anxiety were at work in her heart. There was a similar look in Captain Shiers face when he was moved by deep feeling. I regarded it as another singular coincidence in this marvelous web of curious circumstances.

"Of coorse," continued the Captain, "I'm sorry for th' poor wooman, for much grief has unsettled her mind. Mebbe I owt to hev staayed and reasoned wi' her, but she wor so wrowt oop I wor afraid o' th' consequences. Thou mebbe thowt it queer I left when I did."

"Yes, I did, Captain," was my reply, "and I followed as soon as I could to put a few questions to you."

"Ah! fire awaay, my lad. Oot wi' thy suspicions, for I know thou maun hev soom efter th' queer events o' this morning."

"Your explanation has answered them, Captain. I saw you were uneasy when Mrs. Toplass gazed so earnestly in your face; that undoubtedly arose from the fact that you could not then account for her familiar expression."

"Exactly; it worried me up till a moment gone, when I happened to luke at Lizzie there."

"And as to the scar——"

"Thou thowt it queer she should faind th' same maark on my yed," he interrupted. "Ay, so did I, but accoot for the strange coincidence I cannot. I can oanly repeat what I said befoar: This is my oan true loving wife; we've bin married sixteen years or mair, an' I'm as innocent o' th' chaarge of bein' that wooman's hoosband as my bairn Bob. Lizzie, show him the marriage laines."

Mrs. Shiers went to the sitting-room and returned with an oblong certificate of blue paper purporting to be a true copy from the register of St. Hilda Church. It set forth that John Shiers and Elizabeth Moor were married in the parish church of Hartpond, according to the rites and ceremonies

of the Established Church, after publication of banns, by Alfred Turnbull, surrogate, in the presence of Henry Johnson and Abigail Pounder, on July 5, 1869.

"Noo I hope I've satisfied thee, at least," said Captain Shiers, after I had inspected this interesting document.

"I was satisfied before," I remarked, "only——"

"Oanly this unlooked for chaarge unsettled thy faith," he interrupted. "I don't blame thee, lad; it's nobbut natural, an' I maun confess I'm mystified and muddled and troubled mysen. But I can do ne mair than aw've dune."

"We can pray God to restore the husband of that poor lady," said his wife, devoutly, "or if he is past earthly restoration, we can ask Him to give her strength to bear her lot and to reunite them in eternity."

"Ay, we can do that," cried the man, with a return of his hearty manner.

"And there's a poor stricken sinner in the other room who need's our prayers also," added Mrs. Shiers.

"Who is th' poor chap?" asked the Captain kindly.



"Ned Barton, John."

"Ned Barton! Merciful heaven, trouble seem:  
to be clutherin' roond me."

His face turned red and pale by turns, and the anxious, perplexed look came back. The presence of his old rival was evidently as unwelcome as it was unexpected. He looked wonderingly at his wife, who kissed him tenderly on the forehead, and said:

"He needs our help, John."

"Well, God's will be dune, lass," he said, with a heavy sigh, as he passed his hand nervously through his hair, "but trooble seems to be clutherin' roond."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE DOCTOR'S STRANGE DISCOVERY.

When I reported at the office that afternoon, Dr. Gillman, the celebrated South Side physician, was awaiting me.

"I am going to reverse the usual order of things," said he, smiling, "and interview a reporter. I want some information in regard to a patient of mine."

"I divined his errand at once and said:

"You refer to Mrs. Toplass?"

"Hello! Burbanks," responded the doctor, peering into my face with a professional air. "You need a sedative; your mind is a little too active. There is always danger in these psychological pranks; they betoken inherited neurosis, and are the direct forerunners of disease and death."

"None of your scientific jargon, doctor," said I laughing; "am I not right?"

"You are, my friend," said Dr. Gillman, seriously. "I was summoned to the lady by telephone and found her in a very precarious condition. Her

temperature is very high and her utterance incoherent; I am afraid of brain fever. She has had a severe mental shock, I understand. You were present when the attack came on, and I want you to tell me all about this Captain Shiers, whom she persists in calling her husband. Remember that I am the friend as well as the physician of the family, and knew poor Toplass well."

"Then we may be of mutual assistance, doctor," I responded, "for the case is perplexing in the highest degree."

I told him the facts already set forth in these pages. The doctor interrupted me several times to put questions concerning the man's behavior during the exciting interview with Mrs. Toplass. I informed him of my suspicions and the manner in which they were dissipated by Captain Shiers. The incident of the scar impressed him deeply.

"That scar is the main obstacle to the truth of the man's story," said Dr. Gillman. "It is a peculiar mark. The surgeon who attended Toplass was not very skillful; the stitches were defective, and a depression was left in the center of the forehead, which is observable to a quick eye and a sensitive



touch. I could swear to the scar among a thousand."

"Then it's lucky you've been called into consultation; we can easily devise a decisive test of the man's identity."

"Yes, but this is an affair in which we must make haste slowly. We don't want to make a hullabaloo and flood the papers with sensational articles. Toplass was a reputable man, and there's no telling what may have driven him to this extreme."

"You forget, doctor, that we sprung this quarry ourselves, and it is legitimate game."

"I forget nothing, Burbanks; you deserve a great deal of credit for the considerate manner in which you have pursued the investigation, and you newspaper men are too high-minded to wantonly publish matters which can conserve no good purpose."

"Thanks, doctor; praise from Dr. Gillman is praise indeed."

"The doctor laughed, and said slyly:

"We've got to smooth you fellows down occasionally; you get more kicks than ha'pence, and a little judicious praise is a good button for the sharp point of a pencil."

"We are getting away from the immediate point at issue," said I; "the propriety of publication is a question that can be deferred until we probe the mystery. As we are speaking confidentially now, tell me if everything was smooth and pleasant in the Toplass household."

"My boy," responded Dr. Gillman, "let me again warn you about that brain of yours; it is far too active to be entirely healthy. A sea voyage, with the gentle murmur of the waves to lull your senses into forgetfulness, or a trip to a mining camp, where the piff-paff of the pistol soothes like the tick of your grandfather's clock, is what I advise. But, seriously, why do you ask?"

"But for a satisfaction of my thought, doctor; no further harm."

"Well, to tell the truth, which there is no keeping back from you quick-witted fellows, Mrs. Toplass was a trifle exacting and inordinately jealous."

"And had cause?"

"Not quite so fast, my friend; she had no cause. Toplass was a noble, manly fellow, passionately fond of his wife and babies. He had no eye for any other woman, although treating the sex courteously and considerately as every gentleman should. But,

as often happens where the husband is eminently trustworthy and constant, Mrs. Toplass was often distraught with the green-eyed monster which plays havoc in so many homes. Her sighs and groans and anxious espionage led him a dance sometimes which was exceedingly trying to a sensitive organization."

Wouldn't this unfortunate habit of his wife afford Toplass a reasonable excuse for turning up missing?"

"There's no determining what result jealousy may have in any given case. Constant dripping wears away stone, and a loyal heart may become rebellious by reason of continued accusations of disloyalty. But we will postpone this discussion. Show me the note you received from this Captain Shiers."

I handed him the note; as he read it his face assumed an aspect of intense satisfaction.

"Didn't you notice anything strange about this epistle?" he asked.

"Only one thing."

"And that is?"

"That it is couched in better language than one might expect from a man of Shiers' position and



limited education. Of course, it is rarely the case that a man writes as he talks, and the absence of dialect in the note did not surprise me; but it is reasonable to suspect some little trick of phraseology which would betray homely methods of thought and expression."

"Very true, my friend, but there is something even more remarkable in this brief missive."

"Explain."

"It is unmistakably in the handwriting of Henry Toplass, late commission merchant of Chicago! I know the characters well!"

This was a great discovery; taken in connection with the scar, it was irrefragible proof that Captain Shiers, whose simplicity of life and solemn affectation of humble piety had beguiled me into sympathy and admiration, was a base impostor.

"Let us unmask the scoundrel at once," I cried.

"Don't get excited, Burbanks," said the doctor, quietly. "We must proceed calmly and deliberately. This may not be a case for a policeman's club. It is just as likely that the man is in an unconscious state of pernicious, mental and physical activity, and that the services of a humane physician are required."

"What do you mean?"

"That Toplass may be in a peculiar psychological condition that impells him to act and speak like another person, and that he has no consciousness of his past life or real character."

"Why, that is lunacy."

"Yes, that is the vulgar appellation," responded the doctor, grimly, "but modern science is progressive and in some respects euphonious. The South Side preacher who bodily appropriated the sermon of an eloquent divine was afflicted with unconscious cerebration. In characterizing the conduct of Toplass, who is personating the life and manners of some unknown individual, why not be equally as lenient and call it a complicated case of unconscious cerebration. The cases are analagous, inasmuch as they both evince the imperfect action of a diseased brain."

"Well, what course do you propose, doctor?"

"I think we'd better let the fellow enjoy the felicity of his present domestic arrangements in peace and study him in his war-paint at the meeting this evening."

"Agreed."

"Meantime let us keep our own counsel, and medical skill, in conjunction with reportorial sagacity, will bring order and harmony out of this chaos of confusing conjectures."



## CHAPTER XIV.

### AT THE SALVATION BARRACKS.

Carrying out their craze for military nomenclature the Salvationists call their meeting places barracks. At the time of this story they were dreary, desolate-looking halls, as a rule, for the owners of well-appointed places refused to rent them to the army because of the boisterous character of their congregations. Broken chairs and creaking benches comprised the furniture, indicating physical rather than spiritual welfare; and the dusty windows stuffed with rags suggested that tidiness and cleanliness were not regarded as akin to godliness.

The barracks over which Captain Shiers exercised command were as bare and dirty and cheerless as the veriest sloven could wish. More than half the panes were out of the windows; the chairs were rickety, the walls streaked with finger-marks, the ceiling smoked and flecked with paper pellets, and the floor an inch thick with dust.

When Dr. Gilman and I entered, the army had just ended its street parade, and with beating drums

and tinkling tambourines, were pushing their way through a motly, ill-smelling crowd to the platform. Captain Shiers, flourishing his cornet frantically as he marshaled his forces, was the most conspicuous figure in the band. His face was streaming with perspiration; his voice sounded strangely uncouth as he alternately bawled commands and shouted "Glory!" and his eyes flashed with excitement when he reached the stage and mopped his shapely head with a red cotton handkerchief.

"That's our man, sure as fate," whispered Dr. Gillman; "I cannot be mistaken."

The soldiers took their station on the platform. They numbered thirty in all. Some were attired in red guernseys, others had military jackets with red facings and braided epaulets. The sisters wore short sombre print gowns and broad-brimmed hats, whose only trimming was a bright red ribbon with "Salvation Army" printed thereon in black letters. In repose they were demure, timid looking women, whose facial characteristics were pinched cheeks and large, hungry, glittering eyes. When the clarion notes of the cornet sounded the attack on the hosts of sin, bashfulness and timidity were thrown

to the winds, and they screamed and jesticulated as if Bedlam had broken loose in their midst.

Mrs. Shiers was not there, and I was glad of it. I could scarcely bare to think of that calm, spiritual little woman shaking a tambourine and aiding in that wild jumble of discordant sounds. She was, no doubt, engaged in more congenial work at home, nursing that trembling inebriate back to health and sobriety.

There was little in the service to induce respect. Songs and exhortations followed one another with bewildering rapidity. The base-drummer thanked God for rescuing him from a life of sin. He said the very drum with which he awoke the echoes of that dismal hall had startled him in the middle of a burglary, and he dropped the dark lantern and jimmy and became a soldier of the cross. A lank, lantern-jawed youth, who marked time with a triangle, declared that the drum-beat recalled him from sneak-thieving and drunkenness and directed his steps to Calvary. A peaked-faced damsel of eighteen, with shocky hair and a shrill voice, averred that the same solemn note aroused her from the vilest lethargy of sin and made her cling to the Rock of Ages.



So the pitiable record or past wretchedness went on. Each and every one of the soldiers had a tale of wickedness and reclamation to tell. The shouts of "glory" and "hallelujah" which greeted every confession made the rafters ring.

The effect on the audience was peculiar. The men were rough-looking. Numbers were coatless and collarless; scores bore the impress of vice and dissipation. Some were there to scoff, and interrupted the services with coarse ejaculations. Others, attracted by curiosity, and probably influenced by that potential drum, listened to the prayers and confessions with serious, awe-struck faces. Their attitude suggested the mysterious awakening which the speakers declared must precede conversion. The soldiers directed all their batteries against them, and loud shouts of victory went up when one conscience-stricken man arose in the body of the hall and begged for prayers for his soul.

Captain Shiers read a passage of Scripture and delivered a brief sermon on the saving power of the Gospel. His quaint dialect and magnetic eloquence swayed the audience wonderfully, silencing the scoffers and moving many of the truth-seekers to tears. He told what religion had done for him;

how hard Satan beset him in youth, dragging him through shifting scenes and stages of wickedness until the scaffold, with its horrible dangling noose, stared him in the face.

"God had to get me doon and jump on me," he cried, "befoar I'd relinquish my evil waays. Oh! my friends, divvent wait until you're in that strait; doan't tempt your Heavenly Faather too much. Th' patience of God is graat beyond oonderstandin', but it hes its limits. Doan't try to measure that limit; howl oot your hands, noo, open your hairts to th' blessed dew of divine graace. Ivery moment is precious; time is slipping past us into eternity; noo is th' accepted hour; Coom, poor sinner; throw your burden on th' cross. Begin th' new life to-night. Oh! it's a graat and glorious life, full of sweet joy and peace. Sin is poisoned pleasure; th' gowden chalice hes bitter, bitter dregs. Dash it to th' groond and drink of th' waters of iverlastin' life. Th' draught will be sweeter than wine; it nourishes while it cheers, it maks glad th' soul and opens th' hairt to delights unknown to th' followers of Satan. Coom, my friends, th' good Lord is callin' you. He stretches oot His hands to snatch you fram th' pit.

Doan't hesitate—hesitation means deeth and domination; acceptance means life in Heaven wi' angels and saints and joy everlastin'. Coom, th' Savior knocks at your hairts; oppen them and let Him in."

Several men cried out for mercy; the simple, touching appeal had struck home to their hearts, and their piteous plea for help evoked a loud pæan of praise from the soldiers on the platform. The meeting was dismissed soon after this triumphant result of Captain Shiers' rough eloquence.

"Shall I introduce you?" I asked Dr. Gillman, who had watched the Captain earnestly during the meeting.

"No," was his quiet reply, "the time is not ripe."

"Are you of the same opinion still?" I queried, thinking I detected a tone of doubt in his voice.

"Most decidedly; Captain Shiers is no other than Henry Toplass."

"How do you account for the dialect?"

"I account for nothing just now," he replied. The man who led that meeting is Toplass, and, moreover, he is a genuine, thorough-going Christian, if there ever was one in the world."

"But your assertion embraces a contradiction."



"I know it; but no more buts at present. I am going home to cogitate. To-morrow I may be able to suggest a plan whereby we can change an honest, simple follower of the cross, into a money-grabbing but respectable Chicago merchant. Good night. Come to my State street office at 10 in the morning."

## CHAPTER XV.

### LITTLE BOB'S ACCOUNT OF HIS FATHER.

No man was better qualified than Dr. Gillman to deal with a case of dual personality arising from psychological causes or brain disorder. He was a profound student of mental science, and his treatise on "Insanity in its relations to Metaphysics" was emphatically indorsed by the American Psychological Association, a body of learned and practical men, who do not exempt any function of mind, however exalted, from physical research, but seek the indelible records of eternal truth in the laws of nature. His monograph on "Conscience," in which he traced an essential connection between moral sense and brain, and boldly concluded that conscience was largely a function of organization, caused a great commotion in religious circles, in which he was denounced as an "impious monster, using a perverted intellect to destroy belief in the separate existence of the soul."

The doctor was not a master of this kind of invective. He replied to his critics in a calm, philosophical style, which carried confusion into their

ranks. "Evangelists and theologians," he wrote, fight and haggle over the 'souls' of men, forgetful of the recognized scientific fact that morality and 'spirituality', which appertain to the functions of 'soul,' depend upon organization, and the physical condition of the body and brain. Perfect physical and mental action result in perfect lives. Exaltation of any kind is caused by disease or unhealthy action of the brain. If the millennium ever reigns on earth it will be after centuries of close attention to health and physical development have eradicated the effects of inherited imperfections of mind and body, which are the cause of all the misery, disease and wretchedness afflicting mankind."

Dr. Gillman's declaration that Shiers, whom he believed to be no other than his old friend Henry Toplass, was an earnest and devout Christian, struck me as singular. Thoroughly impressed with the Doctor's theory of the man's identity, I was more inclined to dub him a worthless, hypocritical, bigamous scoundrel, and I was anxious to see him in the dock receiving sentence for his infamous crime.

I did not forget that the doctor hinted at a mental disturbance which might render Shiers unaccountable for his actions, but I could not persuade



myself that this occult condition palliated an offense against the laws of the state.

I met Dr. Gillman, as appointed, next morning. He had just returned from a visit to Mrs. Toplass and was in a thoughtful, contemplative mood.

"She is a little easier," he said in answer to my inquiry. "The danger of brain fever is not so great, although it has not entirely passed. Her mind is rambling and her talk wild and disconnected. She needs perfect quiet."

"Well, as to Shiers—what had we better do?"

"Let him alone for the present. His is a peculiar case and wants careful handling."

"Why not tell him he is found out and bring matters to a crisis?"

"Because such a proceeding might effect a further complication. He is not in his right mind; I am firmly convinced of that, and is unconscious of wrong-doing. A sudden shock might be disastrous in more ways than one. I have set inquiries afoot in England by cable, and want to ascertain what truth there is in his story before disturbing him in any way. That romantic tale of shipwreck, drunkenness, and attempted murder, may be the figment of a diseased brain."

"Then you still believe him insane?"

"What other conclusion can be drawn? The man is in an exalted state, and it is lucky that his madness takes this harmless form. You were surprised last night when I told you he was a devout, earnest Christian. Certain forms of religious belief and conduct are directly traceable to an ill-balanced intellect; but if they tend to conserve the interests of morality we cannot complain, since the great requisite of the age is increased morality in public and private life. Toplass' mind has been turned into a profitable groove, for he is undoubtedly bettering the moral condition of a class of people whose organization is responsive to faith in contradiction to works. Let him go on with his mission for the present. We'll have the parsons down on us with their anathemas quick enough when we show this evangelical medium actuated by a morbid condition of the brain."

"Do you think the woman he is cohabiting with is afflicted with the same species of insanity?"

"That's a hard nut to crack at present. From your account of her, she seems to be one of those high-strung, emotional natures who excuse social irregularities on all kinds of irrational pretexts."

But it's no good discussing her; I've not seen her and know nothing of her past."

"Then the boy, Doctor," said I, thinking for the first time of this stumbling-block to our theory, "he is old enough to give information in regard to his parents."

"Confound it," responded Dr. Gillman, "I'd forgotten the boy. Fourteen years old you say, and bright and intelligent? I think you'd better manage to talk with him alone. Unless he is trained in deceit, and I cannot imagine such a thing, we may get something out of the boy which will be of service when we undertake the restoration of his putative father's reason."

"Or something that will knock all our calculations into a cocked hat," suggested I, with glimmering faith in Shiers and his wife.

"Don't be a simpleton," bluntly cried the doctor; "whatever the boy may tell you will not alter the fact that this Salvation fellow is Henry Toplass. Now, we'd better stop speculating on the subject. Unless something important transpires, we will wait for advices from England. Meanwhile, I must get Mrs. Toplass on her feet and put her mind into a



condition to receive her husband with all charity and loving kindness.

Leaving the doctor to attend to a score of patients awaiting him in the reception room, I went to Halsted street to talk to Bob Shiers. It was not likely that his mother would allow him much in the house while Barton was in a delirious condition, and I wanted to meet him outside and interrogate him cautiously. I took up a position in a drug store opposite the Shiers abode and watched for the lad's appearance. In about half an hour he came out of the house and walked leisurely northwards.

"Hello! Bob!" I said, overtaking him, "where are you going and how's your father and mother?"

"They're all right, sir," replied the lad with a pleased look of recognition. "We've got a sick man in the house and I'm taking a walk to be out of the way for a while."

"Ah! that's Mr. Barton; how is he getting along?"

"He kept us all awake last night, sir, shouting and screaming. He seems terribly afraid of something, and mother prayed with him a good deal. He doesn't like father near him. The doctor was in an

hour ago, and says he'll be all right in a day or two."

"Did you know Mr. Barton in England, Bob?"

"No, sir, but I've heard mother speak of him; he was a friend of hers and she was very sorry to find him here sick and without money."

"Your father knew him, too, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long are you going to stop in Chicago, Bob?"

"I don't know, sir; we may be ordered away at any time. The Western commander may want work done in some other place, and father is always ready to go where the Lord calls."

The boy's face beamed as he spoke of Captain Shiers' readiness to respond to the call of duty; it was apparent that he shared the religious enthusiasm of his parents.

"Do you like traveling, Bob?"

"Yes, sir; its nice to go about and see places, and besides father says its powerful training for the young."

"Your father has traveled a great deal, I believe."

"Oh! my, yes! He was away for seven or eight years once, and mother didn't like it at all. It was

while we lived in Lancashire, and she used to cry a good deal and couldn't sleep at nights. She never said much, but often when she thought I was asleep she'd get out of bed and walk the floor and moan and pray for him to come back. She used to read the 'Pilgrims Progress' to me, and say father was on a pilgrimage and that he'd come back when he'd got rid of his burdensome pack."

"Do you remember when he returned?"

"Oh! yes, sir; we were in Wigan. He came in one night at supper time, looking quite pale and weary, and mother fell into his arms and cried. I cried, too, for mother told me that he'd suffered a great deal, and I must love and be kind to him, and it pained me to see him so worn-like and sickly. He said, 'And this is little Bob?' and he kissed me and cried himself when he saw my lame arm. He soon picked up and said we'd never be parted again; that where he went we should go; and, oh! we've been so happy since, for mother's face got round and smooth again, and her eyes lost the lonesome look. She never cries now, except for joy, she says."



This was all the boy knew. It was enough, however, to throw doubt on the Doctor's confident assertion that Shiers was Henry Toplass, and submerge me again into a sea of bewildering conjectures.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### BARTON TELLS HIS STORY.

Other newspaper duties kept me so busy that I had little time even to think of the Shiers-Toplass mystery during the next fortnight. I heard occasionally from the Doctor, who was awaiting news from England before deciding upon a course of action. Mrs. Toplass had recovered sufficiently from her illness to be removed to her own house. She was nervous and irritable, and threatened to bring a divorce suit against Henry Toplass, alias John Shiers. Dr. Gillman had not mentioned the last phase of the case to her, but Mrs. Toplass now thoroughly contemned the man whose memory she had so recently revered. It was with the greatest difficulty the unhappy lady was persuaded to postpone action until her nervous system was strong enough to bear the severe ordeal of the divorce court.

"I want to see Toplass clothed in his right mind again," said Dr. Gillman during one of our brief conferences, "and reunited to his wife and children.

We must keep this affair out of court. Toplass is a fine fellow at bottom, and ought not to have his misfortunes paraded before the public. There is altogether too much dirty linen washed in the courts for our common good."

While the affair was in this quiescent state, I received a visit from the boy Shiers at the office one afternoon. The little fellow was out of breath when he came into the reporters' room, and I surmised that he had come post haste from home with an urgent message.

"Mother would like to see you at once, sir," he gasped; "she has something important to tell you."

"What is it, Bob?" I asked.

"I don't know exactly, sir, but it's something about the lost man."

I hastily dispatched the work on hand and hurried to the West Side. The hope that I entertained that Captain Shiers had regained his senses and revealed his identity, was dissipated by the eager, radiant face of Mrs. Shiers, who said, on admitting me:

"I am glad you've come, Mr. Burbanks; we have a clue to the missing merchant."



She led me into the sitting-room, where sat Ned Barton, his clothes worn and shabby, and his hands trembling, but with a bright eye and clear complexion which denoted extraordinary recuperative power. Mrs. Shiers introduced him as an old friend.

"And very nearly a dead one," said Barton, with a smile; "I owe my life to this kind-hearted Christian woman, who rescued me from a terrible fate."

"Yes, yes," interposed Mrs. Shiers, with a deprecatory gesture, as though the tribute was not deserved: "we don't want to harp on that topic. Mr. Burbanks knows."

"Then he knows," continued the man, looking gratefully, and I thought a little too tenderly, at his benefactress, "how much I am beholden to you. There (turning to me and speaking warmly) is a woman in ten thousand! She took me from the gutter, reeking with rum and in the last sickening stage of a debauch, brought me to her home and nursed me through the tremens. I was a pitiable, disgusting object, but, thanks to her care and kindness, I am well and sober again, and full of gratitude to my preserver. How will I ever be able to repay her?"

"Do better in the future," said the woman, kindly; "that's the only recompense I require. Now, tell this gentleman your story, Mr. Barton."

But Mr. Barton was in no hurry to tell his story, whatever it might be. He was in the full flush of penitence, and it seemed to afford him a morbid kind of gratification to dwell on the deplorable state from which he had recently emerged. He uttered some fervent pledges about leading a better life, and began to dilate on the miseries imposed by devotion to the flowing bowl.

As I had not come to the West Side to listen to temperance homily, I said curtly:

"That's the usual talk after a spree."

Mrs. Shiers looked pained at this remark, but Barton saw the point and his face colored. He stopped moralizing about himself, and, after an awkward pause, began to talk of a subject more interesting to me. I give his story almost word for word as he told it:

"I understand," he began, "that you are familiar with the history of Mr. and Mrs. Shiers, so I may speak freely of matters which otherwise it might be policy to conceal. While I have been an inmate of this house I have naturally heard something of a

matter which has given this lady's husband and herself no little uneasiness. I allude to the disappearance of this man Toplass, with whom Captain Shiers has been confounded, much to his annoyance. To make my story plain, I must go back a few years, when I was a sober, industrious compositor, holding cases on the *South Durham Mercury*, a journal published at Hartpond. I knew Captain Shiers and Mrs. Shiers well, and was a frequent visitor at their house. For some unaccountable reason he misconstrued my friendship for his wife, whom I knew some years before in Middlesex, and became exceedingly jealous of me, and one night after a heavy bout of drinking, he went home swearing to have my life, and in a sudden fury stabbed little Bob in the left shoulder. Captain Shiers was arrested, and next morning fell to the floor of the court-room in a fit. When he came to he was a raving lunatic and was sent to the asylum.

"It was a great shock to me when I learned that Mr. Shiers imagined that he was plunging the knife into my body when he came so near killing little Bob. The townsfolk began to chaff me about it; unfortunately I was more sensitive than I am now, and the constant gibing drove me to seek solace



and comfort in the flowing bowl. I rapidly developed a taste for liquor, and soon degenerated into a tramp printer. I drifted to the United States, and a little over five years ago came to Chicago and began 'subbing' on one of the morning papers. I was drinking in a groggery near the Union Depot after quitting work on Sunday morning, Sept. 22, 187—. In the saloon, seated at a table by himself, was a man half seas over. I did not pay much attention to him until he called and asked me to join him. Nothing loth, for my funds were low, I answered, 'All right, pardner; I'm with you,' and then looking at the convivial gentleman I started back in amazement, crying: 'Why, Shiers, where did you spring from?' He was the exact counterpart of this lady's husband whom I had not seen for several years. The man regarded me with surprise, and said: 'My friend, the whiskey's affecting your brain; taper off, or you will see snakes.' 'Snakes be blowed,' said I, 'you are Jack Shiers of Hartpond, aren't you?' 'No,' said he, laughing, 'I haven't the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance, either. My name's Henry Toplass, of South Water street.' Well, it's the most singular likeness I ever saw. You are joking—aren't you Shiers?' The man got angry

and cried, 'I asked you to take a drink, but that's no reason why you should guy me and make a fool of yourself.' I apologized, and sat drinking with him for quite a while. He was very sociable and got talking about himself, and by and by he mentioned Hartpond as a place where he'd once lived. 'I knew it,' I cried; you've been up to some monkey tricks and changed your name.' 'What do you mean, you confounded fool?' he said, clinching his fist and looking terribly angry: 'I tell you my name's Toplass, and has been Toplass since I was born.' 'Well, it's funny, but John Shiers' grandfather was Tommy Toplass, of Hartpond.' 'Tommy Toplass,' he cried, 'why that's my father's name.' 'Then you're Shiers' uncle, said I rising and shaking him by the hand, 'and you might be his twin brother.' Well, we got talking about the old country, pouring whiskey down every few minutes in token of friendship and finally I got as full as a tick and was fired out of the place bodily by a brute of a bartender. I have a vague recollection of the man saying he was going east and might probably take a trip to England. That is all, sir, but I haven't the least doubt that the man I was fuddling with was no other person than the missing merchant."

"Why didn't you tell this story when the papers were so full of the man's disappearance?" I asked, suspecting that it was a deliberate concoction to help Shiers out of a serious dilemma.

"I saw nothing about the case," was the man's reply.

"What!" cried I, in astonishment, "you a newspaper compositor and knew nothing of a case of mysterious disappearance about which columns were printed daily for over a week?"

"It's a fact, sir. I told you I got full and was short of money. I was thrown into a cell for drunkenness, and on Monday morning was sent to the Bridwell for thirty days. You know there is not much chance for even a printer to keep track of the news at Colonel Felton's establishment."

This explanation was a plausible one. The record of convictions and the Bridewell roster could be relied upon to corroborate or disprove this part of Barton's story.

"How do you fix the date so positively?" I queried.

"Because it was the first time I had been arrested," answered Barton, "and I marked it as a red-letter day in my mental calendar."



"Have you told Captain Shiers this?"

"No, sir; I only recalled the circumstance this morning, and, owing to his melancholy condition, I thought it best to speak first to Mrs. Shiers."

"Isn't Captain Shiers well?"

"He has been down-spirited since—since that day," said Mrs. Shiers, sighing. "He still works hard and tries to be cheerful; but he has fits of melancholy, during which he keeps muttering that trouble is clustering about us. Perhaps he will regain his spirits when he hears this news about his uncle. Don't you think the poor lady should be told?"

"She is under the doctor's care," I answered, "I will consult him about the matter. By the way, Mr. Barton, did you notice whether this Mr. Toplass had a scar on his forehead?"

"No, sir; the man had his hat on while I was with him."

"Perhaps," said I to Mrs. Shiers, "it would be as well to say nothing to your husband about this new evidence at present. If he is depressed or despondent, it may only aggravate his condition. Besides, important as Mr. Barton's story is as a connecting

link, it throws no light on the whereabouts or fate of Toplass."

"It shall be just as you say, sir;" she responded mournfully, "but I do hope the mystery will be cleared up soon, for my husband has not been himself since that painful interview."

"What are your plans, sir?" queried I of Barton.

"I am going to work to-night, Mr. Burbanks," he replied, "and hope soon to convince you that my protestations of reform are founded on something more substantial than the remorse which usually follows a debauch."

"Do you intend to remain here?"

"I am afraid it will not be convenient, although (looking at Mrs. Shiers tenderly again) I should like to be under the restraining and elevating influence of my friends a little longer."

"Do not leave us until you are strong in the new life," said the woman gently. "we will try and make you comfortable."

"Oh! no," said Barton firmly, but regretfully, "my presence, now that my physical health is restored, may prove irksome to Captain Shiers. I shall take a room in the neighborhood."

As I bade them good afternoon, I could not help recalling the tender glances Barton cast timidly upon his benefactress, and thinking that he was tempting fate by remaining near the man who, when told he was in the sitting-room sick, gloomily remarked:

“Trouble is clutherin’ roond!”



## CHAPTER XVII.

### JEALOUSY AT WORK.

Now, if Barton's story were true, it added strength to the old theory that Toplass was Shiers' uncle. An inspection of the records of the Armory Police Court established the fact that the dissipated compositor was tried on a charge of drunk and disorderly Sept. 23, 187-, and sent to the Bridwell for thirty days. The files of the daily papers showed that Toplass disappeared on Sept. 21. These coincidences did not disturb Dr. Gillman a whit. His comment was:

"Bosh! The only thing proved is that Barton was on a spree, and that he has had one of those hallucinations common to a person saturated with alcohol. Toplass was not a drinking man, and the idea of his boozing in a low resort, while his wife and children were anxiously awaiting him at home is absurd. Then you must remember the handwriting and the scar. Family resemblances do not extend to wounds or peculiarities in penmanship. Stop puzzling your brain about this case until we hear from the other side."

Three days afterward I was surprised by a visit from Captain Shiers. The man was pale and haggard, and his eyes had that haunted, troubled look I had noticed during the interview with Mrs. Toplass.

"Burbanks," he said, in a strained voice, "I've nobbut known thee a week or so, but thou seems like an owd friend, and I want to talk seriously wi' thee. I'm welly crazy, lad."

"Why, what's the matter?" queried I, a little alarmed by his manner, which betokened a mind ill at ease.

"I'm afraid I'm a bit muddled i' my yed," was his moody answer. "I've prayed, and prayed, and prayed, but th' owd laight divvent dawn, my hairt aches sairly, and there seams to be an oneasy, ristless divvil in my brist. Thou knows my story; thou knows hoo I wor cursed wi, drink until a murderin' spirit took howd of me and browt me ti' th' brink o' th' gallows. Lad, I feel I'm goin' wrang again!"

"I trust not, Captain," said I cheerily, "you've been annoyed by that unfortunate error of Mrs. Toplass, but that will soon pass away."

"Naw, lad," said he, sighing heavily; "it beant that. I know the poor lady will coom to her senses

sune. It's summat else; summat that presses haard here (placing his hand to his breast and sinking his voice to a hoarse whisper); summat that stifles me and mak's life a weary burden I'd fain lay doon. Eh! lad, I'm worritted beyond endurance. Did thou ivver hev a presintiment—a heavy, awful feelin' o' comin' ill?"

"Yes," I replied, "but it's no use paying attention to such feelings."

"Mebbe not, lad; mebbe it's nowt but th' liver in ordinary caases. But mine beant an ordinary caase. and it's th' ownly time that prayer didn't lift me oot o' th' gloom. It's serious, mon, I assure thee, and I'm afraid I'll go mad. I'm coom to ease my maind to thee, lad; happen thou may help to lift the load."

"I'm at your service, Captain, if I can do anything to help you."

"That's spokken like a mon," he cried. His face lighted up, but darkened in a moment as he continued: "thou knows that chap, Barton,—it's him that worrits me; its him that's put this load of lead on my hairt; him that's draivin' me well nigh to despair."

"Why, what has Barton been doing?" I asked in amazement.



"He's crossed my path again," exclaimed Shiers excitedly; "he's my evil genius, domn him. Lord, forgie me, but I cannot help it."

The man looked terrified as the imprecation escaped his lips.

"It's awful that I should forgeet mysen in this waay," he went on; "but thowts o' that mon draive ivvery good impulse fram my hairt. Curse him, I maun, for he's carryin' on wi' Lizzie as he did before!"

"Carrying on with your wife," exclaimed I.

"Yes, he's abawt her all th' taim. He whines and smailes and talks abawt owd times; he lukes at her wi' eyes of love; he's castin' a spell ower the poor lass. Curse him! he's draivin' me fram graace, for th' fires of hell raag in my bosom when I think on't."

The secret was out at last. The old jealousy had returned, and Captain Shiers was distracted with grief. Here was additional proof of the man's honesty, but it was not of that I thought when I begged him to be calm.

"You must be mistaken," I said. "Barton cannot be base enough to abuse your hospitality."

"I'm not mistakken," he cried in a trembling voice; "I knaw th' signs. Lizzie is faightin' agin it braavely, but th' fellow's subtle, lad, and his smooth, oily waays are underminin' th' fountain o' my peace."

"Pardon me, I cannot think your wife encourages Barton in any way, Captain."

"I'm glad thou thinks so, lad," he said gloomily. "I'd fain believe in her trooth and steadfastness, but they whisper t'gither and they luke at yane anither wi' queer tell-tale eyes. Mon, it's eatin' into my hairt like a canker; it's robbin' me of all earthly peace, and it's shaakin' my faith in God. I'm not th' saam chap I wor. Three weeks ago I could luke th' world i' th' faace loike an honest mon; but noo I'm a shiverin' quaakin' wretch, wi' blood in my eyes and th' divvil in my hairt."

"Why not forbid Barton your house?"

"What good 'd that do? They'd meet ootside. It's haard, but happen it's best to see what's goin' on."

I tried to reason with the man. I told him that Mrs. Shiers was an honest, God-fearing woman, whose heart was loyal to her husband and her boy.

"Whatever evil may be in Barton's mind, Captain," said I warmly, "Mrs. Shiers is unconscious of it. She has treated him kindly because of his desperate condition. You, of all men, must know that she has acted the part of a gentle, trustful Christian woman, and that she is incapable of wrong even in thought. Such suspicions are unworthy of you. Remember how terribly you suffered for your mad jealousy in the past. Trust your wife, and tell Barton his presence is distasteful to you."

This appeal to the man's better nature had a good effect. He grasped my hand and said chokingly:

"Thou's reet, lad; I'm glad I spoke to thee. I feel better than I've felt since that viper cam into my hoose. Of coorse, Lizzie's true blue. I owt to hev known that, but jealousy is a bad coompanion, lad; it gnaws at yane's vitals and poisons holy love. I wor a villian to doubt her. As for him, he maun keep oot of my waay, or mebbe I'll——"

He made a threatening movement with his clinched fist, but suddenly dropped his arm with a guilty, troubled expression, and said in a subdued tone:



"Eh, but I'm sadly oot of sorts. This trouble hes changed me, lad. I maun ask for forgiveness and think of my waark. God help me! I wor in a bad strait again! To think of me doubtin' my oan lass i' that waay!"

The change was wonderful. He entered the office with gloom and wretchedness plainly written on his face. When he shook my hands on departing, hope and love and manly resolution shown from his features; his step was firm and confident, and there was a cheerful ring in his sturdy voice.

He had gone but a few moments when Dr. Gillman strode into the reporter's room.

"Hello, Burbanks!" he cried, "I have news for you."

"Well," responded I, "impart."

"I've heard from England."

"Well?"

"I was mistaken," he said regretfully, "our hero is not Henry Toplass; he is Captain John Shiers after all!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ANOTHER CURIOUS COMPLICATION.

"Then the man's story is correct," I cried, pleased to think again that Shiers was neither an impostor nor a lunatic; "why should we have doubted it? Honesty and manliness speak from every feature of his face; truthfulness and probity ring in his voice. And his wife, with her calm, saintlike ways, is not a party to false pretenses and fraud. And Mrs. Toplass, unfortunate and unhappy though she be, gains a worthy nephew instead of finding a recreant spouse. And your complicated case of 'unconscious cerebration' is nothing but the product of a heated imagination!"

Dr. Gillman smiled grimly at this outburst.

"Well," said he, slowly, and with a sarcastic inflection which was intended to be very cutting, "if you are not afflicted with acute cerebral meningitis, I will never diagnose another case of brain disease. What have I said to develop such a disastrous malady? My boy, it pains me to witness these symptoms of active, galloping, rabid degeneration in one so young."

"Why, your whole theory has collapsed," I said, warmly, not taking kindly to his badinage; "I knew it would."

"Of course," responded the Doctor, in the same cynical tone, "you knew it all the time. Now let me tell you something you didn't know. Although John Shiers, late of Hartpond, is Captain John Shiers, of the Salvation Army, Mrs. Toplass never had a husband unless he be the man."

"Now, you are mixing things again Doctor," cried I; "we've had enough of mystification. Let's get down to plain facts, if there are any facts in this perplexing case."

"Listen to this, my boy," said the Doctor, quietly, "and let your soul be instructed."

He produced a roll of foreign letter paper and read as follows.

SEDGEFIELD ASYLUM, DURHAM, JULY 12, 188-.  
DR. ALFRED GILLMAN, STATE STREET, CHICAGO,  
ILL., U. S. A. DEAR SIR:—Your cablegram of inquiry concerning John Shiers, a former inmate of this institution, was duly received, and in reply I hasten to submit the following statement:

Shiers was sent here on a commitment by the Hartpond magistrates thirteen years ago this month.



He was suffering from acute mania superinduced by alcoholic excesses. The attack came on him in the court room, where he was being tried for the attempted murder of his child. For several weeks after he was admitted the patient was extremely violent. He would be seized by furious paroxysms, during which he frequently attempted to kill his attendants. We had to apply the strait waistcoat and place him in a padded room. These paroxysms would be followed by great physical exhaustion, when the patient had fits of weeping and cried piteously for his wife and child. Under careful treatment the violent outbreaks ceased, and in the course of six months the patient became one of the most docile and tractable inmates of the asylum.

But this change was attended by a curious, but by no means uncommon form of mild insanity. Shiers' past seemed wholly obliterated from his mind; indeed, he denied that his name was Shiers, and persisted in calling himself Henry Toplass. He assumed the personality of an uncle of that name, who, we learned upon investigation, was lost at sea several years previous to the admission of Shiers into the asylum. The change manifested itself in minute particulars. Shiers formerly spoke

a broad North-country dialect, but his language became refined and he gave indications of an education far superior to his class. He began to read omnivorously, books of travel being his favorite pabulum. So thoroughly imbued was he with his new character that he would indignantly retire to his room if the attendants or any of the patients called him by any other name than Toplass. A scar that he received while being rescued from a shipwreck at Hartpond when a boy, he now claimed was caused by a falling block when the Honduras, the ship in which his uncle sailed on his last voyage, foundered in the Atlantic. He also believed that he escaped the general fate of the crew by jumping into a small boat, in which he was washed about for several days before being rescued by a Norwegian vessel and landed at some port in the Gulf of Mexico. Nothing could shake the man's strange delusion that he was Henry Toplass, instead of John Shiers, and it ended by his being humored to the top of his bent.

After his malady took this mild form, Shiers was allowed the freedom of the grounds, a privilege which he greatly enjoyed. He became cheerful and complacent, and, but for the hallucination referred

to, was in every respect mentally and physically sound. Indeed, in his new character, he developed traits diametrically opposed to the characteristics of his former life, and was an unusually attractive and charming man of quiet, genial habits, and pleasing deportment.

One day, after being with us over twelve months, he disappeared. We searched everywhere for him, in vain. The most diligent hue and cry failed to bring information of the man's whereabouts or fate. He dropped as completely out of sight as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. No one came to visit him after he had been in the asylum a few months. His wife and child had removed to Lancashire, and his grandparents, his only relatives hereabouts, were dead. Mrs. Shiers wrote frequently, inquiring about her husband's condition, after his disappearance, but remembering the homicidal tendency of the man in his former state, and not wishing to alarm the woman unnecessarily, we replied briefly that he was still under our care and progressing as well as could be expected.

But the most curious part of this interesting case is to follow. On August 25, 187-, nearly eight years after he disappeared, one of the attendants found



Shiers walking unconcernedly about the grounds. The man did not appear to think anything strange had happened, but he at once repudiated the name of Toplass, by which, remembering the peculiar form of his insanity, the attendant addressed him. "What's th' good o' tha makkin' fun ov me?" he said; "tha knows as well as aw do that aw'm Jack Shiers, of Hartpond." He spoke in his native dialect and his manner indicated that he had almost entirely recovered his reason. He was brought into the asylum and I questioned him closely as to his movements since he left. "What does tha mean?" he cried. "Aw've nobbut been takkin' a bit ov a stroll. Doan't fule wi' me." The most searching cross-examination failed to show that the patient had any recollection of leaving the institution and being absent nearly eight years. His mind was a perfect blank in that respect; he imagined that he had merely gone out for a walk after dinner and returned with the attendant the same evening.

There was circumstantial evidence that he had been in the United States. His clothes were of an American pattern, the coat bearing the tag of a Chicago tailor named O'Connell. He had no money in his pockets, but we subsequently found a \$50

greenback sewed up in the lining of his waistcoat. He was surprised when we showed him this. The case attracted the attention of all the medical men in the neighborhood. Every conceivable method of testing the man's memory was tried, but he persisted so strenuously as to the short duration of his "walk," that the experiments were relinquished.

The man's mental condition improved rapidly, and in a few weeks after his return he was discharged, perfectly restored in body and mind.

His case was regarded as a remarkable one, and we kept posted on the man's movements after leaving the asylum, in order to ascertain whether he would unconsciously afford a clue to the missing chapters of the period of his insanity. He went at once to Wigan, in Lancashire, and lived there for awhile with his wife and child. He developed a religious sentiment and became an active member of the Salvation Army. During the meetings of this curious sect he frequently referred to his past, speaking openly of his insanity, and attributing it to sin brought on by drunkenness; but never a hint did he give to clear up the mysterious void in his existence.

There was another curious feature in this patient's case. He had been a cornet player in the Hartpond Rifle Band, and when he became quiet and tractable we endeavored to get him to play in the asylum brass band. The man evinced great pleasure in music, and said he was anxious to become a musician, but when handed a cornet he made as grotesque a figure and produced as discordant sounds as one who essayed the instrument for the first time. Notwithstanding the efforts of the instructor, who argued that once learned the manipulation of a horn could never be forgotten, Shiers could not be taught to play an instrument on which he was a skilled performer prior to becoming insane. His musical skill returned after his discharge from the asylum, since we were informed that he led the Salvation services with the cornet. The man had a wonderful imitative faculty while he was under treatment before his disappearance; one of his amusements was the imitation of the notes of a cornet with his mouth, which he did with a surprising degree of accuracy and musical taste.

This is, in brief, all I recall about this remarkable patient. Shiers is in the United States, I understand, on an evangelizing mission, and I have no



reason to doubt the man mentioned in your dispatch is he. The scar on his forehead is peculiar in the respect that the wound was imperfectly stitched and left a depression in the centre. I have the honor to be you obedient servant,

REGINALD KNEEBONE.

Medical Superintendent.

"What conclusion do you draw from this interesting document?" I asked the Doctor.

"Only one conclusion can be drawn," said Dr. Gillman moodily, "and that a very lamentable one. In some way or other Shiers drifted to the United States, and went into business here while laboring under the insane delusion that he was Henry Toplass. He married and accumulated wealth, and then in some unaccountable way disappeared, leaving his wife and children to mourn him as dead. It's as plain as a pikestaff after reading that letter. O'Connell was Toplass' tailor, and it was a fad of his to keep a \$50 note concealed about his clothes. I've heard him mention it a hundred times; it was the only idioscrasy I ever noticed about him. To think that Henry Toplass, the sharp, energetic Chicago merchant, the loving husband and devoted father, the kind and considerate friend, should be

no other than a Yorkshire watchmaker, whose mind was turned by drink! It's enough to make one's blood curdle to think of it."

"But may there not be some mistake, Doctor? Is it possible that a man could assume a separate personality and maintain it intact for several years, and then suddenly return to his old ways and habits?"

"Nothing is impossible to the insane," responded the Doctor, in the same moody tone. "That letter leaves not the slightest loophole to escape the terrible conclusion that Mrs. Toplass was the wife of an absconding lunatic. Every item of Toplass' imaginary career fits Shiers' case, even to the imitating of the notes of a cornet, which, you will remember, caused the inspirational recognition of the man, despite his native coarseness and uncouth tongue."

"How could Shiers or Toplass get out of Chicago and travel to Europe without leaving some clue for expert detectives to follow?"

"Detectives be hanged!" cried Dr. Gillman, impatiently. "When did a Chicago detective ever do anything but guzzle whiskey and pocket fees for criminal incompetency? Detectives are a pack of professional nincompoops who cover their ignorance

and venality by a pyramid of egregious egotism and stupid pretension. Don't talk about detectives in a case requiring common sense and ordinary capacity for investigation. If you literary fellows would stop exploiting those inflated ignoramuses they would soon lack an office peg on which to hang their No. 10 hats."

Having vented his spleen on the poor detectives, Dr. Gillman continued:

"There was a clue, and a good clue, to the movements of Toplass after leaving his warehouse, and that dissipated compositor, who was railroaded to the Bridewell, stumbled across it."

"Then you believe now that Toplass was drinking in the saloon near the Union Depot?"

"Yes, that conclusion is forced upon me now. Shiers as Toplass was not a drinking man, as I told you before, but it is reasonable to believe, in the light of Dr. Kneebone's revelations, that an uncontrollable craving for liquor preceded the dawnings of sanity. Instances are on record where an impulsion to old habits was the first indication of a return to mental health. The conversation with Barton must have aroused a train of ideas, vague and indistinct perhaps, but accumulating strength as the



blurred page of memory slowly unrolled, which perplexed and bewildered the man and finally impelled him to flight. While he talked with the printer Shiers hinted that he might take a trip to England to visit his father, Tommy Toplass. He undoubtedly took a morning train East, and in a dazed condition sailed for Europe. Some mysterious influence drew him to the asylum, and his reason returned like a flash while he wandered through the grounds. That is the only explanation I can give. One cannot account for the operations of a diseased brain, and unless some shock unsettles the man's mind again and it reverts to its former channel, we may never know what transpired from the time he left Chicago until he was found at Sedgefield."

"Well, Doctor, this leaves our case in a very embarrassing condition."

"It does, indeed, Burbanks," responded the Doctor; "it makes Shiers legally guilty of bigamy in marrying Mrs. Toplass."

"And it takes away the stigma which you remarked would rest upon modern evangelism if it were proved that Shiers was insane."

"That's true. My old friends, the theologians and evangelists, haven't that to explain away.

Shiers may be a crank, but the present evidence is that he has as much and as healthy a mind as he ever possessed."

"Well, what is to be the next move?"

"We must possess our souls in patience. We must carefully consider whether the best interests of society would be promoted by revealing what we know or by suppressing it."

"As a newspaper man," I remarked, "I am opposed to suppressed sensations."

"Naturally you are, Burbanks, but we have here a very delicate and complex problem. Publication of the facts would check Captain Shiers in his barbaric but semi-useful career, and would engulf Mrs. Toplass in endless grief and misery by proving that she never was a wife, and that her children are illegitimate. You and I alone possess this grave secret. I leave it to your judgment as a humane man, not as an ambitious reporter, to decide this problem."

"I think, Doctor," said I, after a few moments reflection, "you had better try and convince Mrs. Toplass that her husband is dead."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### CAPTAIN SHIERS SLIPS THE TRACES.

When I told him of the latest development of this kaleidoscopic case, the city editor said:

"Mrs. Toplass has suffered enough, poor woman, and it would be cruel to add to her sorrow by relating those curious facts in cold type. As for Captain Shiers, he is a harmless crank, doing neither much harm nor much good by his salvation mission. We'll let the matter drop. There's no likelihood of anybody else getting hold of the story, and some day you will have a chance of writing it up as an interesting Chicago mystery."

"Man proposes and God disposes," says the French proverb. It was decreed that the matter should not drop, and that the same cause which led to Captain Shiers' downfall in the Durham seaport should entail upon him misery and madness in Chicago.

Being in the neighborhood of the Shiers domicile one day, I thought I'd drop in and learn how the Salvationist and his interesting wife were getting along. I found Mrs. Shiers alone. Her face



was pale and careworn, and there were dark rims around her eyes. To my inquiry she said her husband was well, but there was a sad tone in her voice which denoted trouble in the household. I at once associated it with Barton, as I could not imagine that any other cause but unreasonable jealousy on Shiers' part would so blanch the cheeks of this faithful woman and bring tears to her eyes.

She flushed under my questioning glance, and then with a sudden frankness cried:

"I'm not well myself, Mr. Burbanks; John has been acting strange of late, and I mistrust that all is not right with him."

"Nothing serious, I hope, Mrs. Shiers?" said I, uneasily.

"It's the old trouble, I'm afraid, sir," she replied with quivering lips.

"Not drink, surely."

"Ah! yes, sir," she responded, her eyes filling with tears, "it's drink and—and jealousy again. It's perhaps wrong for me to say this, sir, but you know our sad history and the wretchedness and woe of our past. Oh! sir, it wrings my heart to see him drifting away from grace. He has fought and

struggled against the old passion, but he is weak, sir, and does not pray as if his soul were right."

"But he still continues his work?"

"Yes, but it is not with the same heartiness. There's liquor on his breath, sir, and he cannot tamper long with the cup and remain safe. I feel as though my heart would break at times."

The little woman broke completely down and sobbed piteously for awhile.

"Where is Mr. Barton?" I asked, when she had regained her composure.

"He has a room in the neighborhood, and comes in occasionally. I'm afraid its through him that John has gone wrong."

"Why, he does not tempt Mr. Shiers, surely?"

"No, not in the way of drink, sir. Mr. Barton is honestly trying to live soberly and righteously. But John has begun to suspect——"

She covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly again.

"I know what you mean, Mrs. Shiers," said I gently; "your husband told me a few days ago of his madness, but he left me fully convinced of your love and truth, and promised to be a man. I'm exceedingly sorry that he has not kept his pledge."

"Oh, he'd be all right and loving and happy again, sir," she said hurriedly, as though she ought to defend the man's character, "if he'd keep away from that cursed stuff; but it's a hard struggle when the craving comes on. It's all imagination about Mr. Barton, sir, and John admits it himself after the frenzy leaves him."

Before she could say more Captain Shiers entered the room with flushed face and hesitating step. He looked suspiciously first at his wife and then at me, and said in a thick voice:

"Eh, noo, what hev you two been talkin abawt?"

"His wife was confused and apparently afraid to reply.

"We've been having a quiet talk about yourself, Captain," answered I.

"You hev, hev you?" he said, a frown overspreading his face; "then you've had a mighty good subject I can assure you, and I cannot see what thou has hed to greet abawt."

He looked at his wife fiercely and sat down.

"And let me tell thee, lad," he continued in the same thick, guttural tones, "it beant safe policy to meddle in family affairs. Thou's shown uncommon



sense in some things, but thou's a fule to step in atween mon and wife."

"Why, John," protested his wife timidly.

"Howd thy tongue, lass," he said, angrily. "I can manage my oan affairs. St. Paul saays a wooman should be seen and not heerd, and I think th' owd lad were reet, becos a man hoo's ruled by his wife is a white-livered milk-sop, onyhoo."

The man was well under the influence of liquor, and I thought it wise to take my departure. As I reached for my hat Shiers rose unsteadily and said:

"Doan't be in a hurry, my lad. There's soom things that owt to be spokken oot as a prize-faighter strikes—straight from th' showlder. And I'm fain to speeak my maind noo. I divvent laike sneaks of ony kaind. Ivery thing is oppen and above booard wi' me, and what I want to know reet noo, wi' no shirkin' or circumlocution, what is thou oop to?"

"John, John," cried his wife, sobbing, "how can you talk to the gentleman in that way?"

"Stop thy greetin' thou fond fule," he said, savagely, facing the little woman with a gleam in his bloodshot eyes.

"For heaven's sake, go sir," cried Mrs. Shiers to me.

"He winnat go till I've hed my saay," shouted her husband, placing his bulky form in the doorway. I tow'd thee I divvent like sneaks, and thou wasn't mon enuff to tak me oop. Doesn't thou think I've enuff to put oop wi' wi' that chuckle-yedded, deceitful skoondrel, Barton, skulkin' aroond my premises? Doesn't thou know that my patience has bin tried to th' utmoost? Or is thou yane of thoase bowd villains hoo thinks he can swagger through ony mischief belaike it suits his time and convenience? Gie me answer at yance, or——"

His wife shrieked as Shiers made a threatening gesture. I looked him steadily in the face and said:

"Captain Shiers you are unduly excited this afternoon, and are making cowardly insinuations against your wife that you will regret when you are sober."

"Sober!" he bawled, raising his hand again; "does thou mean to saay I'm drunk? Why, thou conscienceless skoondrel, I'll mash thee and purr thee on th' yed."

He advanced another step, when in an instant the savage look fled from his face and his arm dropped nerveless to his side. Tears sprang into his eyes and he cried hysterically:

"Forgie me, lad! I'm sair beat. Troubles coom clusterin' roond and I'm welly daft. Eh! Lizzie, my lass! I'm a wreck again. Th' laight hes left me, and I'm wallowin' i' th' black and dismal swamp of evil passions. Eh! but I'm main sorry for my ugly tongue and temper."

He grasped and shook my hand wildly, and then staggered to the lounge, upon which he fell exhausted.

"Does this occur often?" I whispered to the weeping woman.

"No, sir; this is the first violent outburst. You had better go while he is quiet."

"But is it safe to leave you?"

"Perfectly safe, sir," she said with a sad smile; "he'll wake penitent and remorseful, but he must drop his commission in the army. Oh! it is such a disgrace."

As I left the house I came face to face with Ned Barton. The man was better dressed, and there was a healthy color in his cheeks.

"Ah! Mr. Burbanks," he cried merrily; "I am glad to see you. How do you find our friends?"



Coming fresh from that painful scene the man's jauntiness jarred on my nerves, and I responded significantly:

"I do not find them as peaceful and contented as they were before your advent."

"Oh! I guess the old man has slipped the traces again," said Barton with a perceptible sneer.

"That's rather a slighting way of referring to the husband of the woman who rescued you from the gutter."

This thrust went home. The blood mounted into Barton's face, and his eyes flashed angrily.

"I'm not aware that it's any of your business," he hotly retorted.

"Pardon me, my dear sir," I said blandly, "you have yourself to blame if I touched you on the raw. But let me give you a word of advice. Captain Shiers is enraged about you hanging around his home. As you elegantly express it, he has slipped the traces, and you will be the first to feel the effect of his mad freedom. If you value your head keep out of his sight."

Barton turned pale as a ghost, and his lips trembled as he muttered:

“The old fool.”

He turned on his heels without another word and walked hurriedly away from Shiers' door.

## CHAPTER XX.

### NED BARTON MURDERED.

I had taken an instinctive dislike to Mr. Barton. He impressed me as a flippant, selfish fellow, who, knowing the irritation his presence caused Captain Shiers, persisted in inflicting the man with his society. That he had more than a friendly regard for Mrs. Shiers I strongly suspected. Those tender glances he cast upon her were not inspired by pure gratitude for charitable services; they bore the sign of a cowardly, unlawful passion. His sneering allusion to the unfortunate Salvationist proved the contemptible narrowness of his nature, and I could not refrain from showing him that his base designs were known.

Owing to the sickness of a member of the reportorial staff, I was transferred to night police work for the remainder of that week. This duty is one of the most arduous and important that falls to the lot of a city reporter. The night man makes his headquarters at the Central Station, where telegraphic reports are received concerning all criminal



or sensational happenings within the police jurisdiction of Chicago. He has to be continually on the alert, and work with lightning celerity to supply his paper with graphic accounts of fires, suicides, burglaries and murders.

The second night after my assignment to this duty was an unusually busy one. Early in the evening there were two serious fires in the business section; later on came reports of three shooting scrapes in saloons, and at 11 o'clock, after my manuscript accounts of these affairs had been sent to the office, news was received of a desperate murder on West Twelfth street, near the Cathedral. It seemed as if the devil had broken loose and an epidemic of crime was raging.

I jumped into a carriage and drove rapidly to the Twelfth Street Police Station, where the victim had been taken. Captain O'Donnell, one of the most active and vigilant officers of the force, gave me all the details of the affair he had been able to gather.

"At 10:45," he said, "one of my men, who was at the corner of Twelfth and Blue Island avenue, heard two shots in the direction of the Jesuits' College. On going forward to ascertain the cause, he

found a man groaning on the sidewalk, with blood flowing from a wound in his left side. The poor fellow was in mortal agony, and could only gasp that an unknown man had attempted to rob him, and on meeting with resistance had drawn a revolver and fired twice at him and fled. He pointed westward, as if to indicate that the assassin ran in that direction, and then became insensible. The officer called the patrol wagon and the victim was brought here. He is in my private office now in care of the county physician. He is still alive, but there is no hope for him. He may die at any moment. I have turned in a general alarm and officers are scouring the city for the murderer."

"What's the name of the wounded man?" I asked.

"We've not been able to get it from him," replied Captain O'Donnell.

I followed the Captain into his private office to look at the victim. I started back in surprise when I saw the prostrate man. There, stretched out on a cot, with ashen face and the life-blood slowly trickling from a wound near the heart, was Edward Barton, the whilom friend and patient of Mrs. Shiers.

Captain O'Donnell noticed my astonishment and asked if I knew the man.

"Yes," I replied, "he is a compositor named Edward Barton."

"Where did he work?"

"That I don't know; he but recently recovered from a fit of sickness."

"Do you know anything else about him? Has he any friends who ought to be notified?"

I was about to mention the names of Captain Shiers and his wife when the suspicion flashed across my mind that perhaps the Salvationist was Barton's assailant. Without any intention of blocking the wheels of justice I thought it discreet to withhold my suspicion, and answered evasively:

"I don't know where he lived."

Barton opened his eyes while we were conversing and gave me a feeble glance of recognition.

"The man knows you," said Captain O'Donnell; "try what you can find out from him."

As I went to the side of Barton's couch the Doctor whispered:

"Be careful and not excite him; he is at a low ebb."



The man motioned feebly, as though he had a communication to make. I bent over him and he gasped painfully:

"I did not heed your warning, Mr. Burbanks; he has killed me!"

"Who do you mean?" I asked.

"You know—Shiers."

He closed his eyes after this effort and there was an ominous rattle in his throat.

"What did he say?" demanded O'Donnell, who had not caught the full import of the man's communication.

"Wait a moment," responded I, as Barton showed signs of rallying. The poor fellow opened his eyes again and fixed them on my face with dying intensity.

"Don't—tell," he whispered; "save—her—the—man—is—mad!"

"But you told the officer some one tried to rob and then shoot you," I whispered; "wasn't that true?"

"No," he gasped, with a faint smile flickering on his pallid face; "I—didn't—want—them—to—know. He—saw—me—leave—the—house—and—followed

— and — shot — me. But — spare — her — feelings, Don't—tell;—there's—been—misery—enough."

"Whom does he accuse?" inquired O'Donnell.

Barton looked at me entreatingly, and tried to shake his head. I hesitated to reply. O'Donnell observed my reluctance, and, turning to the wounded man, demanded:

"Who did you say shot you? Answer, my good man; you are in a dangerous state, and we want to apprehend your assailant."

Barton tried to raise himself on his elbows. The glare of death was in his eyes; there was a gurgling sound in his throat. He opened his lips and gasped:

"Nobody!"

A quick, convulsive shudder passed over his frame and he fell back dead.

"Now, Burbanks," said Captain O'Donnell, throwing a newspaper over the man's face, "who killed that poor fellow? He gave you some one's name."

I felt inclined to respect Barton's dying request, but realizing the claims of justice as opposed to compassion, I answered:

"He said John Shiers shot him."

"John Shiers!" exclaimed Captain O'Donnell, "and who's John Shiers?"

"The captain of the Salvation Army."

"Great Cæsar!" cried the excited Captain. "Why, we'll soon pinch him. He is known to every officer on the West Side."

O'Donnell hurried into the outer office and sent a dispatch to the Central Station that Shiers was the man who committed the murder, and every available officer in the district was set to work searching for the captain of the Salvation Army.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### BREAKING THE NEWS TO MRS. SHIERS.

Having set the machinery of the law at work to capture Captain Shiers, I did not consider myself under any obligations to conduct or direct the police officers to his residence. It was a simple matter to find out the abode of so well-known and eccentric a character, and my newspaper ambition, to say nothing of a deep compassion for the assassin's wife, urged me to be first on the field to break the news, and, if possible, to obtain additional particulars of the crime in advance of my professional rivals.

The hour was late and there was not a moment to lose if I wished to get a full account of the tragedy in the first edition. Telling the driver to head towards the office, so as to avert the suspicion of my associates, who were in full force at the police station by this time, I stopped him at Desplaines street and urged him to speed his horses to the grocery store on South Halsted street over which Shiers and his family lived.

We reached there shortly after midnight. There was a light in the window of the sitting-room. The front door was open, and I ran upstairs; The noise of my footsteps brought Mrs. Shiers to the landing, with a lamp in her hand.

"I thought it was John," she cried in a frightened voice, as she recognized me.

"Is he not here?" I asked.

"No; but whatever's the matter?" queried the little woman, her face aglow with excitement. "Come in."

I entered the sparsely furnished sitting-room, which was now so familiar to me. Mrs. Shiers set the lamp down on a table, and stood regarding me in silence for a short space.

"You bring bad news," she cried, placing her hand nervously on her breast; "I see it in your face. What has happened John? Quick; tell me."

"You are alone?" I stammered, scarce knowing what to say.

"Yes, yes," she replied excitedly. But the news—tell me the news. I can bear it whatever it may be."

She seated herself with forced calmness near the table as though she desired to show that she could

control herself. I cast about for some soothing expression with which to tell the story, but my mind ached with its burden and the words I sought refused to fashion themselves on my lips. The strain became unbearable, and with a bluntness I knew to be cruel but which for the life of me I could not repress, I said:

"Ned Barton has been murdered!"

"Murdered!"

The woman did not shriek this awful word. It came from her lips like a heart-broken wail. It was like the cry of a despairing soul—wrestling with an immensity of woe.

Her head fell on the table and her frame shook violently. She was not weeping however. When she lifted her face every vestige of color had fled, her lips quivered but her eyes were dry and shone with feverish brilliancy.

"It has come at last!" she cried. "Oh! cruel, cruel fate. We were so happy; John was peaceful and contented, and we could not praise God enough for His mercy. Now everything is black and his hands reeking with blood."

Heavens! thought I, has she knowledge of the tragedy, or does she, by some subtle instinct, divine



the worst? She did not wait for me to question her.

"Mr. Burbanks," she said, wringing her hands, "do not be afraid to speak of this. Have they caught John?"

"Caught him!" I exclaimed, "then you know it was he who shot Barton?"

She clutched at her bosom again while she answered hoarsely:

"No, no; but your presence here and his threats tell me as plain as words that the hands of my husband are stained with blood. Is it not so?"

"Unfortunately, it is, Mrs. Shiers. The man told me before he died that your husband shot him. He seemed to forgive the deed, for he begged of me not to tell the officers."

"And they do not know?" she cried, as a hopeful light sprang into her face.

"They do know, madam. The police captain stood by while the man breathed his last, and I was compelled to inform him of what Barton said."

"Ah!" she moaned, piteously, "but it had to be—it had to be! Vengeance belongs to the law, and John will—oh, God! God! let me die!"

She paced the floor in direful agony. I watched her closely, dreading that her grief might assume some terrible form. In a few moments she quieted down again, and asked me for the details of the crime. I told her what little I knew, and asked if Captain Shiers and Barton had quarreled in her presence.

"No, not exactly," she answered. "Mr. Barton was here this morning, and John told him roughly that his visits were not agreeable. Barton said they would cease entirely, as he intended to leave shortly for Kansas City. The sooner they stop, said my husband, the better for us all. The cause of this disagreement pained me acutely, sir, for the young man was merely respectful and grateful for my attention during his sickness. Still I knew how bitter and unreasonable John was, and that it would be easier for us all if I made no protest. John seemed pleased that Barton was going away; he kissed me on going out at noon, and promised to ask pardon for his sins and go on with the good work again, for you must know, sir, that since the day you were here he cast off his uniform and drank steadily. I began to worry when John did not return for supper. About 10 o'clock Mr. Barton came to bid me

'good-by,' stating that he had decided to leave the city next day. While we were talking John appeared. His face was flushed, and I knew that he had been indulging again. I was fearful there would be a scene, but my husband turned abruptly and went out with an evil look on his face when he caught sight of the visitor. It may have been 10:30 when Mr. Barton left. There was a heavy load on my heart, and I had a presentiment of mischief. I was waiting for John, sir, when you came. Something told me that the worst had happened—that my husband had met Mr. Barton and carried out his threat to kill him."

"Did he make that threat to-day?"

"Oh! no, sir," wailed the woman; "but he said it several times of late, and I was afraid of his temper when he was in his cups."

Heavy steps on the stairs made us both start. She ran to the door with a frightened look. Two policemen pushed past her into the room, as if they expected to pounce upon her husband. They were visibly dissatisfied when they found that Mrs. Shiers and I were the only occupants.

"Hang those reporters," muttered one, "they're always spoiling our game."



"Where's Captain Shiers?" demanded the other gruffly of the woman.

"I do not know, gentlemen," she said in a low, sad voice; "I have not seen him since 10 o'clock, when he merely looked in and went out again."

"That's suspicious," said the one who anathematized the reporters; "we'll take a look round the premises."

They searched the kitchen and the bedroom, where little Bob was asleep in a cot. Disappointed again, they came back to the sitting-room, and asked what Mrs. Shiers knew about the affair.

"Only what this gentleman has told me," she replied, referring to me.

"Then we're losing time here," remarked one, "he knows no more than we do." And with this sapient observation the policemen left to pursue their search elsewhere. The noise they made in going down-stairs awoke Bob Shiers, who came into the room in his nightshirt and in a trembling voice asked what was the matter.

Mrs. Shiers broke down at the sight of her boy. She clasped him tightly to her bosom and her tears rained on his head.

"Mother! mother?" he cried, "what did those horrid men want?"

"Oh! my child! my child!" sobbed the heart-broken woman.

This was all she could say. The boy fell on his knees and, not knowing the cause of her deep sorrow, prayed God to bless and comfort his mother. Mrs. Shiers listened to the childish plea with streaming eyes, and when I turned to go they were both on their knees asking divine guidance and consolation in this grievous hour of trial.

Outside an officer watched the house in the hope that Captain Shiers would seek shelter at home.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE SALVATION CAPTAIN DEAD.

Owing to the unpleasant notoriety the Salvation Army had achieved in Chicago, the murder was the sensation of the day. One of the newspapers called Shiers a professional criminal, who used his connection with the eccentric band of religionists to cloak nefarious projects. Another said his methods of worship savored of lunacy, and that the noisy sect ought to be suppressed in the interests of peace and morality. Isolated remarks of the captain were quoted to show that his past record was professedly vile, and that the murder was the natural outcome of inherent vicious propensities. There were murmurs of lynching in case the assassin was caught, and so bitter was the feeling in the quarter where the man resided that his followers suspended their street parades for fear of inciting the vengeful passions of the mob.

Meanwhile the police authorities searched in vain for Captain Shiers. Every outgoing train was watched and a close vigilance kept on departing



vessels, as the report got out that he had been a sailor and might try to escape by the lake. The Salvation brethren, who went to condole with his wife, were closely shadowed in the belief that they might have knowledge of his hiding place. But the activity of the officers proved fruitless. Days merged into weeks and not a trace of Captain Shiers could be found.

I consulted Dr. Gillman several times while the hunt was at its height. He was greatly perturbed by what he called the tragical termination of a perplexing case, but volunteered no suggestions as to how a man with pronounced marks of individuality like Shiers, could manage to elude the combined vigilance of the Chicago police force.

"Burbanks," said he on one occasion, "I have spoken before of the intense difficulty of gauging or predicting the actions of a crazy man. There's no method of determining the antics a diseased brain may impel in any given case. Madness is a subtle and perplexing disease, as you may have observed by your casual study of Shiers' career in and out of the asylum. The mystery will be cleared up some day, but it may be after the man is dead and forgotten, so far as the public is concerned. We can

do nothing but wait patiently the developments of time."

"You believe, then, that Shiers' malady had returned when he killed Barton?" I asked.

"Undoubtedly; the man's mental poise was jeopardized the moment he resumed his drinking habits, and that his malady took a homicidal form we have abundant proof in his past record."

"Have you any idea, Doctor, that the other idiosyncrasy—the assumption of the character of Henry Toplass—would return?"

"Who knows? It is not at all improbable."

"Then it would not be unlikely for the man, unconscious now of his crime as he was of his former vagary, to attempt to resume relations with Mrs. Toplass."

The Doctor started perceptibly at the suggestion.

"For heaven's sake, Burbanks," he cried, "keep that terrible thought to yourself. Mrs. Toplass is a very sick woman again, and serious consequences might ensue if you inadvertently sent those cold-blooded fiends, the detectives, to aggravate her nervous condition by pestering her with heartless questions."

"But she must be prepared for something of the kind."

"In what respect?" queried the Doctor, warmly.

"She must know that Shiers, the man whom she challenged as her husband, is wanted on a charge of murder."

"She knows nothing of the sort," cried Dr. Gillman; "every newspaper containing mention of the affair has been kept out of her sight."

"By your advice?"

"Yes, by my advice."

It was no use arguing with Dr. Gillman; he set his face sternly against any intimation of the man's identity with Henry Toplass, the missing merchant, being given the authorities, and at last, although I had a vague suspicion that his motive was stronger than a mere desire to allow the case to work out its own solution, I agreed to respect his wishes.

But what of that grief-stricken woman on the West Side?

I saw Mrs. Shiers frequently during the excitement of the search for her unfortunate spouse. She grew paler and paler as the weeks passed on. Her features sharpened with anxiety and deep lines of care furrowed her brow. The sorrowful expression



to which Captain Shiers called attention after his interview with Mrs. Toplass, deepened, and was so marked at times that one could almost imagine he was looking into the face of that unfortunate lady.

"When I mentioned this peculiar circumstance to Dr. Gillman, he said:

"It is not so strange as you think. Both women have experienced the same harrowing sorrow, imposed through association with the same unfortunate man. Similarity of suffering has graven the same lines on their features; it bears out the oft-recognized fact that man and wife, through intimate communion and mutual aspirations, develop a resemblance in facial expression."

Mrs. Shiers bore patiently this stroke of dire adversity. She was not so active in Salvation work as formerly; she took no part in the public services, but she occupied herself with tender ministrations to the spiritual weal of the newly converted Christians. The captain who succeeded to the command of the army bore warm testimony to her piety and helpfulness to the cause.

"She is a brave, good, pure woman," he said, "one who has passed through the fire of bitter affliction and left all earthly dross in the process.

Ah! sir, if ever there was a saint, Mrs. Shiers is one. Her trouble has been great, her anguish keen, but her good deeds are written in letters of gold in the eternal record, and she will reap rich reward in the celestial kingdom."

I received a note from her three months after the tragedy, requesting me to call, as she was preparing to return to Europe, and "wished to thank you once more for the many acts of kindness and consideration to myself and dead husband."

The significance of those last words started a train of curious thoughts. Her dead husband!

Previous experience had warned me of the futility of speculation, and I went over to Halsted street to bid the woman farewell and listen to her explanation of this absorbing problem.

"I am ever so much obliged to you for calling," Mrs. Shiers remarked, after welcoming me in the sitting-room. "I wanted to see you before starting for England."

"I presume you are glad to get out of this city, Mrs. Shiers," said I.

"Yes," she responded with a deep sigh, "this place has many painful associations. I came with glad, hopeful thoughts for the future, sir, and for a

time it seemed that life in the New World would be a source of perpetual peace and content. But we are in the hands of One who sometimes ordains things contrary to human desires. His infinite wisdom arranges our course, and though the way looks dark and dreary and there are briars and thorns in the path, yet we must bow cheerfully to His will and bear the tribulations He sees fit to impose."

"There was a passage in your note that excited my curiosity, madam," I remarked. "You referred to your husband as though you knew he was dead."

Tears came into her eyes, and her voice trembled as she responded:

"That was one of the matters I wished to speak to you about. John is dead sir; he died very soon after that awful affair. I was asked not to say anything about his death, even to you, sir. I gave my word that I would not, but I feel partially absolved from the promise now."

"To whom did you make that pledge?" I asked.

"Pardon me, Mr. Burbanks, but I must not tell that yet. He died peaceably, but with his mind sorely distraught and confused. I closed his eyes myself. Ah! it was a sad trial, sir, but I was thankful it was no worse. I dread to think what might



have happened had the officers discovered him. Thank God we were spared that bitter blow."

"Did he die in Chicago?"

"Yes, sir; while his mind was far afield, and the memory of that frightful night entirely obliterated, he found kind and indulgent friends who nursed him through his illness and sacredly guarded his terrible secret. A great many things were explained which puzzled and bewildered me during that trying time when you first made our acquaintance. I know now the full misfortune of that poor lady. Ah! sir, how ill-fated John seems to have been from our mortal standpoint. But I cannot say more, sir. When and how my poor husband died must remain a mystery for the present. All I can tell you is that he is dead and that God, in His infinite goodness, has given me grace and strength to bear the yoke."

The subject was a painful one, and I forebore questioning the little woman further. We conversed awhile on her plans and prospects for the future. She told me that she was going into home mission work in London, and that officers of the army would interest themselves in her son and educate him for an evangelical career.

"You will know all in good time, sir," she said as I bade her adieu and wished her a safe journey to her new field of labor.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

BY THE GRAVE AT WOODLAWN.

Early in the following September Dr. Gillman, who seemed to avoid me after our last recorded interview, came to the reporters' room and invited me to take a drive with him.

"It's a beautiful day, Burbanks," said he cheerily; "the leaves are just beginning to turn, and there's a health-giving breeze from the lake. Sheathe your pencil and come to Woodlawn with me. There is a certain matter I want to talk over with you and a certain constraint between us that ought to be removed. Do you remember what day this is?"

"It's the 9th of September, Doctor," I answered, somewhat surprised at his manner. "I know no particular reason why I should remember it."

"But there is a very good reason why you should bear it in mind," he responded; "it is the anniversary of Barton's violent death."

"Ah!" exclaimed I, surprised still more, "are you going to visit his grave?"



"Ask no questions," said the doctor, "but come along."

We drove out to the cemetery, and Dr. Gillman, who had been very talkative on almost every topic except the one uppermost in my mind, led the way in silence to a grave, well kept and beautifully bordered with plants and flowers, in the northwest corner of the burying place.

"There," he said solemnly, pointing to a plain marble slab at the head of the mound, "there is the key to the mystery."

The tombstone bore the following inscription:

SACRED TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
HENRY TOPLASS,  
WHO DIED AT  
CHICAGO NOV. 10, 188—  
AGED 42 YEARS.

Here lurks no treason, here no envy dwells,  
Here grow no damned grudges; Here are no  
storms,

No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.

"Then this is Shiers' grave," said I quietly, after reading the inscription.

"It is; but you do not seem surprised," responded Dr. Gillman, who had been observing me closely.

"I knew the man was dead; what matters it where he is buried, or what sentiment you inscribe on his tombstone?"

"It's just as I feared," cried the Doctor, with some excitement; "you cannot trust a woman after all. Did Mrs. Shiers tell you everything?"

"No, but your question does, Doctor. You were the kind and considerate friend who guarded the man's secret and saw him quietly interred here. Tell me the last chapter in the man's history and I'll forgive you for hoodwinking me."

"It was for that purpose I brought you here, Burbanks," said Dr. Gillman. "At 1 o'clock on the morning of Sept. 10, last year, I was aroused from my beauty sleep by the violent ringing of my night bell. I dressed hurriedly and went to the front door, where I was astonished to find Mrs. Toplass, in a dreadful state of agitation. 'Doctor,' she cried, 'for heaven's sake come to the house right away; Henry has returned and needs your attention.' I was doubly astonished by this intelligence. The Toplass residence, as you know, is but four blocks from my house, and we were there in a few moments.

On a sofa in the parlor lay Captain Shiers muttering wildly to himself and shaking violently. He gave a glad shout of recognition on seeing me, and said in a husky voice: 'it's the first time in years, Gillman, but, hang me, it's given me a shake. Went to see a friend off to Europe and we had to drown the sorrow of parting. Came near drowning myself, old fellow; here I am though, still in the ring, but groggy, not only on my pins but all over my carcass. And Nellie, here, has been weeping and watching for me. I promised to take her and the children out this afternoon, and she was disappointed, poor girl. Sorry, Nellie; it won't occur again.' I knew at once what the trouble was. The man had had a violent shock of some kind, and his brain had turned into the old groove; he imagined that he was Henry Toplass again, and the thread of his dual personality was resumed exactly at the point where it was thrown off six years before. His breath smelled strongly of liquor; under ordinary circumstances it would have been right to conclude that he was suffering from over-stimulation. I gave him an opiate, and when he quieted down I interrogated Mrs. Toplass, who was crying bitterly, as to how he acted when he came to the house. "Just about the



same, doctor," she answered between sobs. 'The bell rang loudly about midnight, and I opened the front window and asked the cause of the disturbance. "It's Henry, Nellie," cried a well-known voice, which sent a pang through my heart, for, oh, Doctor, as you know, only a few weeks ago I found him masquerading under an assumed name and living with another woman. I was tempted to call the police and have him taken away, but I could not find it in my heart to do so. The sound of his old, familiar voice called back my slumbering affection, and I ran down stairs and admitted him. He staggered into the parlor, saying: "I'm sorry, Nellie; forgive me." When I lighted the gas I saw his pitiable condition, and I came at once for you, Doctor. Is he seriously ill, Doctor, and why do you think he deserted and denied me?'

"I told her frankly that Mr. Toplass was in a dangerous state, and wanted perfect rest and quiet. That something serious had occurred I was confident, and to avoid scandalous complications, I deemed it expedient to remove the man to my own house. 'He will be better under my immediate care,' said I to Mrs. Toplass.

"The effects of the opiate wore off in an hour or so, and Shiers, who was timid and docile, readily agreed to go home with me. He had an idea that he required particular medical treatment, and said: 'Don't worry, Nellie; Gillman will bring me round all right by morning.' I took the man to my own bed-room and sent my coachman for a man whom I could trust implicitly to nurse him.

"It is not necessary to go into all the details of the man's sickness. He was in a very dilapidated condition and symptoms of cerebral softening soon manifested themselves. At the time you intimated that justice required full particulars in regard to his career, to aid in the man's detection, he was rapidly sinking. I knew that it would impose unnecessary suffering on those two innocent women to publish the facts to the world, and that the man would soon expiate his crime by succumbing to his inherited malady.

"He rambled a great deal toward the end; sometimes his assumed character had the ascendancy in his delirium, and he would cry out about Nellie and the children; at others he would be plain Jack Shiers, with his thick Yorkshire brogue, babbling about little Bob and his lass, Lizzie. Mrs. Toplass,

who was made seriously ill by the shock of his return and pitiable state, was kept ignorant of the facts of the tragedy. To-day, so far as I know, she is still in blissful ignorance of the most lamentable incidents in his history. I had to tell her some things, for when she came quietly to see the sick man he often let fall expressions which aroused her curiosity. Toward the last, under a pledge of strict secrecy, I informed Mrs. Shiers of her husband's whereabouts and condition, and I brought her in my carriage to visit him. She is all that you have described her—a sweet, lovable little woman, with a heart too noble and refined for this rough world. The man died peaceably in her arms. That, in brief, is the last page in Shiers' strange, eventful history."

"Of course you had reasons for burying him under the name of Toplass," I said.

"Yes," was the reply; "one was that he was Henry Toplass prior to sinking into the sleep of death; another that the burial certificate would not at that late day cause perplexing inquiries, and still another, that it freed Mrs. Toplass from embarrassments which might at some time interfere with her



peace and comfort. She broke up her establishment in Chicago two months ago and has gone abroad with her children. I do not think she will return to the United States, since her last words to me indicated that she contemplated marriage with an old suitor, who is permanently settled in the south of France.









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